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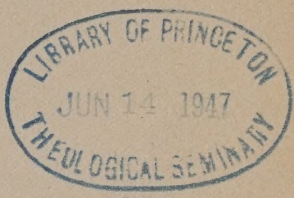


BY

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"POPULAR MISCONCEPTIONS AS TO CHRISTIAN FAITH AND LIFE"

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# PREFACE.

One of the marked features of the unusual intellectual activity of recent years has been a fresh investigation of the Bible and of various critical questions pertaining to it. There has been a great advance along all these lines. But while questions of Biblical criticism and discussions *about* the Bible not unnaturally awaken more or less of popular interest, it is of far greater importance, in the first instance, that people so read and study the sacred Word itself as to gain an intelligent and comprehensive acquaintance with its contents, especially the spiritual truth contained in it. One of the urgent needs of the time is a larger and more intelligent familiarity with the English Bible. It is surprising to what an extent Bible reading and study are neglected even in Christian homes. Nor has this widespread neglect been adequately remedied by the Sunday School —which might itself be vastly improved both in the quality and the methods of its instruction. Happily the signs of a growing popular interest in Bible study are encouraging. Books of a character to stimulate and to foster this interest and to aid in such study are frequently issued; the importance of giving the Bible a more prominent place in educational systems is being recognized; improved methods of Bible instruction in institutions of learning and in the Sunday School are engaging the attention of our best educators; while

Summer Assemblies, Extension Bible lectures, and public Bible classes are constantly giving prominence to the subject, and helping to broaden and to deepen popular interest in it.

The present work, the outgrowth of wide personal experience, is designed to be a modest contribution toward the promotion of this interest. It is not its purpose to set forth a complete scheme of Bible study, least of all to enter the arena of critical or technical discussions, but rather to indicate certain lines and methods of study, and to give such practical suggestions and illustrative examples, as may stimulate earnest seekers after biblical knowledge to study the sacred Word on their own account. Such persons, many of whom seem at a loss to know just how to do this to advantage or where to begin, may perhaps find here the help needed to start them in the work.

While it is hoped that the sample studies presented may not be without interest and profit in themselves, their main value is to be sought in the motives and the assistance afforded by them to independent and systematic private study of the Scriptures. No attempt has been made exhaustively to point out spiritual lessons. These will occur to the thoughtful reader.

The aim of the book, in a word, is to assist in promoting and popularizing the study of the Bible.

F. T. L.

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# I

1.

## The Bible and How we Came by it in English.

2.

## Personal Use and Study of the Bible.

## FOREWORD.

As preliminary to entering upon a systematic study of the Bible, and in order the better to appreciate the value of the sacred Word, it is well to get clearly in mind a few general facts in regard to its nature, its origin, its preservation through the centuries, its leading translations, and especially the interesting story of how we came by it in the English tongue. As we learn of the patient labor of scholars in different periods and in different lands in translating and transcribing it; the opposition frequently encountered by them, even the martyrdom of some of them for their efforts to make it available to the people; the successive steps which have led to the recent revision of the authorized or King James' version through the joint labors of English and American scholars; and of the American edition of the same (1901), which is undoubtedly the most perfect translation of the Bible into English which has ever been made, we cannot fail to recognize our indebtedness to them, or to appreciate, in growing degree, the Book which has attracted to itself so much attention and painstaking labor. Some of these facts are presented in Section 1 of this division.

In Section 2, after indicating some reasons for studying the Bible, a number of practical methods which can be pursued privately or in clubs in such study are pointed out. The plan of writing out in connected form, however roughly, the results of one's investigations—both as a help to fixing in mind the facts thus collected, and to render the narrative itself more vivid to the imagination, to say nothing of ease in reviewing afterward—cannot be too strongly recommended.

## 1.

## THE BIBLE AND HOW WE CAME BY IT IN ENGLISH.

The most conspicuous, most widely circulated, most extensively read, most influential book in all the world, is unquestionably the Bible. While multitudes of people are still in ignorance of it and its momentous message, and while many, strange to say, who do know of it, seem utterly indifferent to its contents—by a great and increasing number it is received joyfully, believed implicitly, lived by faithfully, and in defense of it, not a few would unhesitatingly go to the stake.

Many interesting inquiries may be raised with reference to the Bible. What is it, its nature, its aim? How, when, and where did it originate? Who wrote it? Whence its present English form? What proof have we of its trustworthiness?

### I.

The word Bible is from the Greek word *biblia,* meaning "books," and originally and for several centuries was employed with that significance. By modern usage it has come to signify *the book,* the *one* book, containing in itself all the particular books of the canon. For, as we open and begin to examine it, we find that it comprises a number of distinct works, independent of each other,

written mostly by different authors, in different ages, covering altogether many centuries, yet bound together as if forming a single volume. Some of these separate writings are historical, some are poetic, some are didactic. In reality there is here a literature, the cream of the literature of the ancient Jewish people, covering a period of several centuries. It is divided into two groups of writings, with a gap of perhaps three or four hundred years between them. One group, very ancient, is called the Old Testament,—the other, embracing writings composed during the first century of our era, is called the New Testament. In the former collection there are thirty-nine separate books or pamphlets, in the latter twenty-seven, sixty-six in all. The authors of these books, perhaps thirty-five to forty altogether, were from every rank in life, prophets, priests, kings. Among them are a sheep-master, a vine dresser, several fishermen, a tax-gatherer, a physician, and a tent-maker. The writers of the Old Testament lived in different ages, some of them separated from each other by centuries, during which great social and political changes took place in the condition of the Hebrew people.

It is of the highest importance to the student of Scripture that he understand and appreciate these facts, although having been accustomed from childhood to see all the books of the Bible bound together within the covers of a single volume, it may not be easy at once to divest himself of the idea that their authors, if not contemporary, must somehow have understood each other's views and plans and written in concert. As a matter of fact, each of these sixty-six books is independent, and must be examined and studied by itself, just as we would

investigate the claims of any other individual book in a library of books. It is foreign to our present purpose to study each of these books critically, but we may at least refer to some general facts of interest in regard to the two groups of writings.

Consider first the *Old Testament.* "Ye search the Scriptures" says Christ (John 5:39), "because that in them ye think ye have eternal life, and these are they which bear witness of me." The reference is to the Old Testament—there being in existence at that time no other collection of sacred writings—whose contents had for ages been fixed with tolerable certainty. Like all other literatures, it was the growth of centuries. The works of which it is made up relate to moral and religious subjects. Morality is as characteristic of Jewish writings, as philosophy of Greek writings, and jurisprudence of the Roman. These works were finally gathered together and constituted the sacred writings of the Jewish people.

This collection was probably made or begun between four and five hundred years B. C. Popular belief has assigned this work to Ezra and those associated with him in organizing the Jewish church after the return from captivity. Investigations as to the sources of this tradition are beset with so many difficulties that we are not able to pronounce upon conclusions reached with absolute certainty. Very likely the work was gradually accomplished, beginning with Ezra and extending through a part if not the whole of the Persian period. The books thus collected, were arranged in three great divisions, entitled the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. The first consisted of the first five books—called the Pentateuch,—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuter-

onomy, to which some would add Joshua and call it the Hexateuch. This was the original nucleus of the Bible, really the first Bible, to which there are not a few references in the later Old Testament writings. The Prophets included many books which had been written during the period of the monarchy and the captivity. They were carefully edited in the schools of the prophets. These included Joshua (perhaps), Judges, First and Second Samuel, First and Second Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve Minor Prophets—Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi. Under the general term Writings, or Sacred Writings, were included the Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Lamentations, Ruth, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah and First and Second Chronicles.

This division into three parts, the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings, was not merely accidental or arbitrary. It was really a reflection of the different stages of development through which the Jewish people passed. The Law was its foundation. Under this, or by means of it, the chosen people were trained for their high mission. Their struggles when they came into closer connection with the kingdoms of the world, are portrayed by the Prophets, while the other writings set forth different phases of their religious life and experience, and their thought upon the various problems which were presented to their minds as they advanced in civilization. As to the number of books in the Old Testament, Josephus speaks of there being only twenty-two, instead of thirty-nine as we count them. But originally the double books, like first and second Kings, first and second Chronicles,

first and second Samuel, were each considered one, as they properly are. In like manner Ruth was attached to Judges, and Lamentations to Jeremiah. Ezra and Nehemiah were reckoned as one because they treated of the same period, and the twelve minor prophets naturally fell into one class. This accounts for the apparent discrepancy between the numbering as given by Josephus and the present method. Josephus was particular to have the number twenty-two to conform, for some reason, to the number of letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

As still further confirming the contents of the Old Testament as we now have it, the books which comprise it are frequently named during the Christian era, thus giving a continuous line of testimony from the time of Christ to the present day. This is true not only of the Christian writings, but of the Jewish as well. Antagonistic as, in many respects, are the beliefs of the Jews and the Christians, they have both held these books in the highest esteem and as a sacred trust. The Hebrew Bible of the Jew is the Old Testament of the Christian.

The *New Testament* contains twenty-seven different books, although about half of them are the work of a single author, Paul. Like the books which make up the Old Testament, these were gradually gathered together. The period of time covered by them, however, was but a single century. Probably all or most of these books were written before the close of the first century. At first the apostles and those associated with them in carrying on the work which Christ had inaugurated, were too busy to commit many of their thoughts to writing. There was, indeed, little necessity for so doing, since they were con-

stantly traveling here and there and declaring the things which they had seen and heard.

But at length as the churches multiplied and the apostles began to reach an advanced age, the importance grew upon them of having the things in which the Christians surely believed, put into permanent form. The original witnesses would soon pass away, and while their testimony might be communicated to others, and be handed down by those who had received it, it was far better to have it written out and authenticated while they were yet alive. In this way the gospel histories and the book of Acts were written. Matthew wrote his Gospel more particularly for circulation among the Jews; Mark, the companion of Peter, wrote his for the Romans; Luke, Paul's companion, for the Greeks; and John for Christian people in general. Luke also wrote the book of Acts, giving a sketch of the labors of the apostles, Peter being the central figure in the first part of the book, Paul in the second. The history which had been begun in his Gospel, he continued in the Acts. The epistles, written by Paul and others, grew out of the circumstances and needs of churches and individuals at the time they were composed. In them there is a practical application of gospel principles to existing emergencies.

Thus the origin of the various New Testament books is accounted for. They come to us as writings belonging to the apostolic age. That there may have been a peculiar quality in them which we indicate by the term inspiration, does not alter the fact of their being historical. All the New Testament books have been subjected to the severest criticism, but the more we learn of the history of the times from other sources, the more the validity of the New

Testament records is established. The day has passed when one can throw doubt upon their substantial accuracy. All these New Testament books, different as was their origin and diverse as were their specific aims, were yet devoted to a common theme. That theme was Jesus Christ, His life, His teachings, His work. The gathering of these books into a single collection involved much devout criticism and covered a long period. Many manuscripts were extant during this time, copies as well as originals, together with other writings which were not truly apostolic. There was not perfect agreement at once as to which books should be included in a collection which all should receive as authentic, but after years of sifting and discussion and balancing of arguments, there came to be substantial harmony of opinion, a kind of providential agreement among the churches concerning them. Councils afterward declared what had before taken place spontaneously. In this way the present New Testament came into existence. It was formed gradually and naturally, and its genuineness is confirmed by the fact that passages are quoted from it again and again by writers of the first three centuries. To such an extent indeed had this been done, that if all the New Testament books were suddenly lost, they could be nearly if not entirely reproduced from these quotations. It is asserted that the citations made by Origen, who wrote in the third century, embrace two-thirds of the New Testament. It has been claimed that with the exception of eleven verses, the whole New Testament has been found in the writings of these first three centuries.

Here and there some devout scholar has not been entirely satisfied as to the right of two or three of the

minor epistles, like Second Peter, or Second or Third John, to a place in the collection, but there is, nevertheless, quite general unanimity of opinion with reference to the entire New Testament as we have it. Doubtless some of the apostolic writings were lost. Paul seems to refer to two or three letters which he himself had written but of which we have no record. If these should ever come to light and their genuineness should be clearly established, they could properly be included in the collection even at this late day.

## II.

The books of the Bible, the Old Testament and the New, were originally written and preserved in *manuscript* form. As printing had not been invented, if a second copy were wanted it had to be laboriously written out by hand. The writing was generally done by those who made copying a distinct profession. To receive this writing, two kinds of material were employed. One, which somewhat resembled our paper, made from reeds which grew along the Nile, was called papyrus. The other, called vellum, was made from the dressed skins of young antelopes and other animals. The latter was much more costly, as it was also much more durable, than the former. Until paper was introduced into Europe by the Arabs, vellum was principally used for all important documents. Most of the New Testament manuscripts were written upon it. In writing, a reed pen or brush was employed. The oldest manuscripts were in the form of rolls. For ease in reading they were generally fixed on rollers, so that the part read could be turned back out of sight, and

a new portion brought to view. The manuscripts used in Jewish synagogues are still in this form.

None of the original manuscripts of the Bible have come down to us. The material on which they were written was perishable, although some of the manuscripts which we possess are fully 1500 years old. But a great many copies of these manuscripts, or copies of copies, were made and have been preserved. More than 1500 of the latter are in existence. Tertullian, writing about 200 A. D., states that some of the original manuscripts of the apostles were in existence in his time, but no later mention is made of them. Most likely they perished in some of the persecutions when search was made for the Bible, and when every copy that could be found was destroyed. Long prior to this, copies had been multiplied to such an extent that at the beginning of the third century it is estimated there were in use not less than 50,000 copies of the New Testament, in whole or in part. The copyists here and there made slight mistakes, but in general they were remarkably accurate, and comparisons of these copies have been so thoroughly and so extensively made that the genuine text has, for the most part, been accurately established. As to the Old Testament, the disadvantages of the greater antiquity of the books is largely counterbalanced by the scrupulous, even superstitious care which was taken of the text by all Hebrew copyists, and the marvelous unanimity of the most opposite sects and parties among all Jews in regard to its value. As a matter of fact, the books of the Old Testament have come down to us, as some one has said, with an evidence of their genuineness and antiquity ten-fold more various, copious, and conclusive, than can be adduced in support

of any other ancient writing. We have good reasons for believing that we have the sacred oracles just as they were originally written, the exceptions being so slight as to be hardly worth mentioning.

A word in regard to each of the three oldest and most valuable New Testament manuscripts now in existence, so far as known, and each of which has its history, will be of interest. All the other manuscripts prior to these three seem to have perished.

1. The Alexandrian, now in the manuscript room of the British Museum, is assigned to the fifth century. It was given to Charles the First of England in 1628 by the Patriarch of Constantinople. It reached England seventeen years too late to be of any use in preparing the Authorized or King James' version of 1611. The Patriarch procured it from Alexandria, in Egypt, hence the name of the manuscript. It is so fragile that it is kept under glass, and the use of it confined to scholars. The vellum is somewhat decayed, there being holes in it, and some of the letters along the margin are worn away. In a few instances whole leaves are missing. More than twenty-four chapters of Matthew have dropped out, and there are other omissions. It contains, however, most of the Old and New Testaments, besides other writings. A fac-simile has been published. It is thought to have been written in Egypt about the beginning of the fifth century.

2. Of still higher value is the Vatican manuscript in the papal library at Rome, where it has been since 1475,—possibly longer. It belongs to the fourth century, and is thus a hundred years earlier than the Alexandrian manuscript. It is thought to have been written at Caesarea. The leaves, over seven hundred in number, are of vellum,

about a foot square, and are bound together in book form. There are three columns on a page, and forty-two lines in each column. The writing is in capital letters without any division between the words. It bears signs of having been retraced when the original ink had faded. Unfortunately it is incomplete, as some leaves of the Old Testament have been lost. The latter part of the Hebrews, the pastoral epistles, and the Apocalypse are lacking. Most of these omissions have been supplied from later manuscripts by a scribe of the fifteenth century. It is jealously guarded, especially from Protestant inspection, but by the aid of photography a perfect fac-simile was published a few years ago, and copies are to be found in many public libraries. This is regarded by many scholars as the most valuable of all the ancient manuscripts which have come down to us.

3. To the same century, the fourth, belongs the Sinaitic manuscript. The narrative of its discovery a few years ago at Sinai by a German scholar named Tischendorf, reads like a romance. He spent his life in the discovery and deciphering of old manuscripts of the Bible, traveling all over the east, and searching every old library he could gain access to for the purpose. In 1844, while on a tour of observation, he visited Sinai where was a group of antique buildings called the convent of St. Catharine. For many centuries it had been the home of a brotherhood of monks. A rich library had grown up here in the remote past, but the spirit of learning had long since died out. At the time of Tischendorf's arrival, the convent was occupied by twenty or thirty ignorant hermits. It was enclosed by a wall forty feet high. The place of entrance was thirty feet above the ground, and to this

the visitor had to be drawn up by a rope. Tischendorf's credentials being satisfactory, he was admitted and allowed access to the library. While examining the volumes, he noticed a basket of waste material on the floor which was intended to be used as kindling. In picking over the pieces, he came upon several leaves of the Old Testament in Greek, which were evidently very ancient. Forty-three of these leaves he was permitted to take away, although the interest he manifested in the manuscript so aroused the suspicions of the monks as to its value that they refused to give him any more of it. The leaves which he did obtain, however, he published upon his return to Germany. This created great excitement among scholars, some of whom tried in vain to discover where the manuscript had been found. Another visit nine years later was fruitless. In 1859 he visited Sinai again, this time under the patronage of the Czar of Russia. After looking through the library and not being able to discover any traces of the other parts of the manuscript, he was about to leave in disappointment. But the night before his departure an incident occurred which turned his disappointment into rejoicing. The steward of the convent invited him into his cell, and showed him as a great curiosity a copy of the Septuagint which was lying wrapped in a cloth on a shelf. It proved to be the very document for which Tischendorf had been searching, the "pearl of all his researches," as he calls it. The outcome of all was that the monks were prevailed upon to present it to the Czar, the head of the Greek church, who deposited it in the National Library at St. Petersburg, and published a fac-simile of it at his own expense. The Codex thus brought to light contains most of the Septuagint, the

whole of the New Testament, and two apochryphal books. The work is written on vellum with four columns on each page. As every sheet of four pages is made from the skin of a single antelope, one can see that it must have been a costly production. Eusebius was commissioned 331 A. D. to procure fifty copies of the Scriptures handsomely prepared for use in the churches of Constantinople, and there are reasons for supposing that this manuscript, and also the Vatican, were among this number.

The preservation of these manuscripts is providential, almost miraculous. With their testimony the Scriptures rest on a surer basis than do the writings of Homer, Herodotus, Plato, Aristotle, or those of any other ancient author. In this age of discovery, other valuable writings may be found, and still stronger evidence of the genuineness of the Scriptures be obtained

## III.

Hardly less interesting is the story of the way in which the *English version* of the Bible came into our hands. The version itself has been an evolution. The earlier crude translations, made when scholarship was less advanced than at present, usually met with opposition, and won their way but slowly to popular use. The recent revision, particularly the American edition of it, is unquestionably the best translation which we possess, and is likely to be appreciated and used more and more as the years pass.

The original languages of the Bible were Hebrew and Greek, the Old Testament being written in the former, the New Testament in the latter. In order that it might

be circulated and universally read, it was necessary that it be translated into other tongues. This work of translation was begun very early. The Old Testament was translated into Greek during the third century before Christ. The conquests of Alexander the Great had extended the Greek language widely. The translation then made is commonly called the Septuagint, or "Version of the Seventy," from a tradition of its having been prepared by seventy learned Jews of Alexandria, at the command of Ptolemy Philadelphus, king of Egypt. For convenience, it is generally designated LXX. It was made at different times, beginning somewhere about 280 B. C. For ordinary use in Palestine as well as beyond its bounds, it supplanted the Hebrew for centuries, and is still the Bible of the Eastern church. It was used by our Lord and his apostles, and most of the quotations in the New Testament from the Old are taken from it. This accounts for the slight difference we sometimes notice between the Old Testament as we have it, and the citations from it in the New Testament. The Jews of the Dispersion were thus provided with the Scriptures in a language which they could understand. By this means their national faith and religious observances were kept alive, while knowledge of the fact of a coming Messiah was spread abroad. Later converts to Christianity everywhere found the Word of God ready to their hands, since Greek was at that time generally spoken throughout the Roman world, while the unimportant differences found in the LXX, confirm the general accuracy of the Hebrew Bible. As a rule, the translation is free rather than literal, aiming rather to give the sense than the literal rendering of words and phrases.

Within fifty years after the New Testament was written, we have Syriac, Ethiopian, Egyptian, and later on Gothic, Armenian, Latin, and other versions. The work of translating has been going on ever since, until now the Bible, in whole or in part, is rendered into all the leading languages and dialects of the world. A translation of it made in the Latin tongue in the fourth century, called the Vulgate—the "Revised Bible" of the ancient Western church—has been so prominent as to call for a word in passing. It was prepared by St. Jerome, one of the greatest scholars of his day. The necessity of having a correct and uniform text of the Bible, led Pope Damascus to ask him to undertake the task of revision. First of all, he corrected the translations of the New Testament and the Psalms, completing them 385 A. D., but soon saw that any revision of the Old Testament from the LXX would be unsatisfactory. He therefore determined upon a new translation from the Hebrew. To accomplish this he betook himself to Palestine. Here, in a cell belonging to a convent in Bethlehem, which is still shown to visitors, he carried on his work for twelve years, using such old Hebrew manuscripts as he could secure, and occasionally availing himself of the assistance of Jewish rabbis. The translation was finished A. D. 394. There was bitter opposition at first to its introduction to the churches, but gradually it made its way until it became the standard Bible of the church of Rome. It was the only Bible known to most people in the Dark Ages, and at the time of the Reformation the Hebrew and the Greek originals were regarded by many as the invention of heretics. For more than a thousand years it was the parent of every version of the Scriptures in

western Europe. All the earlier English translations were made from it. No other work indeed has ever had such an influence on the history of the Bible. Various versions have been made of it, it having suffered as much from copying as did its predecessor, the LXX, but in spite of this the text is in an unsatisfactory state. This is to be regretted since Jerome had access to manuscripts which were of an earlier date than any which now exist. In fact this translation is almost as old as the earliest of our present Greek manuscripts.

It was not until the time of John Wycliffe in the fourteenth century, that the entire Bible appeared in the English tongue, only parts of it having been translated before. His work was completed about one hundred years prior to the discovery of America. Wycliffe was born A. D. 1320. After filling various important offices in the University of Oxford, he devoted himself for a number of years to preaching. During this time he held frequent controversies with the dignitaries of the Romish Church, and wrote numerous pamphlets attacking abuses in it. His course naturally aroused the bitter hostility of the ecclesiastical authorities, but all their efforts to condemn him as a heretic were frustrated through his powerful friends at court. All that his foes accomplished was the public condemnation of his writings, his subsequent ex-communication, and the burning of his bones forty years after his death. It was the corruption prevailing within the church which suggested to Wycliffe the translation of the Bible as the best way of opening men's eyes to its character. Yet he did not, as Luther did, sever himself entirely from the church. He hoped for reforma-

tion within it. He is called the "Morning Star of the Reformation."

Wycliffe's translation was finished in 1382, or two years before his death, although parts of it were probably issued earlier. He gladly accepted the assistance of other scholars, and afterward, until his death, devoted much time to a revision of his earlier translations. The book was published in manuscript, and was not printed until 1438, or more than fifty years after its first appearance. A copy cost a sum equivalent to nearly two hundred dollars, nevertheless the translation was widely circulated. It is said that some people gave a load of hay for a few chapters of an epistle, and that others offered as much for the loan of one of these manuscript copies. The translation was condemned by the church and many copies of it were destroyed, but there still remain over one hundred and fifty copies of Wycliffe's Bible to show how extended its circulation must have been. As it was impossible at that time to consult the original Hebrew and Greek manuscripts of the Scriptures, as many Latin Bibles as were available were compared, the Latin Vulgate forming the basis of the translation. There was an advantage in this latter fact, inasmuch as the Vulgate was known, and a translation from it would arouse less suspicion than one from the original Hebrew or Greek. It can still be read without difficulty, although it is five centuries since the translation was made.

After Wycliffe's translation, a hundred years passed before another was published. Two important events occurred during this period which had an important bearing upon the translation and circulation of the Scriptures.

One of them was the invention of printing about the middle of the fifteenth century; the other the revival of letters, by which scholarship received a new impulse. The Greek language was studied afresh in the Universities, dictionaries and grammars of it were compiled, and the way was prepared for fresh and more accurate translations than had been possible before. It was under these more favorable conditions that the next great work of translation, that by William Tyndale, was accomplished. To him is to be assigned the foremost place among those who have left their impress upon the English Bible. His translation of the New Testament was published in 1525. Having received the best education of the times at Oxford and at Cambridge, it became at length his ambition to make it possible for every plow-boy to read the sacred Word. His work was done under many difficulties, there being much prejudice against it and much opposition from the Romish authorities. The translation was finished at Hamburg on the Continent, and was finally published at Worms. As Tyndale was one of the first scholars of his day, and the translation was from the original tongues, with all the other aids which the age afforded, it was of special value. Two editions of 3,000 each were printed. In order to elude the vigilance of the authorities who were watching the ports, and to get these Bibles into England, all sorts of secret devices were employed. Some were packed in bales of cloth, others in barrels, or in sacks of flour. In this way many of them reached their distination and were scattered far and wide through the country A revised edition was printed in 1534, and a number of editions of several thousand each were issued before his death. At least thirty-three editions before 1560 are

known; all of them being practically reprints. As soon as the New Testament was out, Tyndale set himself to master the Hebrew language in order that he might translate the Old Testament also. He issued the Pentateuch in 1530. Other portions were translated from time to time and were left in manuscript and published later. Tyndale suffered martyrdom, being burned at the stake in 1536. His dying prayer was, "Lord, open the King of England's eyes." It is to him we owe the style of our present English version. The version is faithful to the original and yet thoroughly idiomatic. It is popular rather than literary. Whole pages of the authorized version are his translation but slightly altered.

The first complete printed English Bible was issued by Miles Coverdale in Zürich in 1535. He was a scholar of some repute, but inferior in attainments to Tyndale. His Old Testament is mainly a translation of the Swiss German Bible, and the New Testament Tyndale's version, though both were carefully revised by the help of Luther's German version and the Vulgate. Matthew's Bible, as it was termed, appeared in 1537. It seems to have been the work of John Rogers, the first of the martyrs in Mary's reign, a friend of Tyndale, really his literary executor. The bulk of the work consisted of what Tyndale had printed and left in manuscript. The remainder of the Old Testament was taken from Coverdale. A quantity of introductory matter designed to assist in Bible study was also added. The main importance of this translation is that it obtained the King's sanction, thus becoming the first authorized Bible. It was also adopted as the basis of almost every subsequent version.

The Great Bible, so called from its large size, was the

next English translation. It was the outgrowth of a desire on the part of Cranmer and others to have a translation which might be called national and compare with Luther's German Bible. The publication of it in Paris was interfered with and the presses and types confiscated. The translation was, however, completed in London, and published in 1539. It is sometimes known as Cranmer's Bible. By a Royal Proclamation a copy of this Bible was ordered to be provided for every church. In some cases copies were chained to desks, and a few old churches still preserve them. Those who could not afford to buy a copy, crowded eagerly to these churches to read one or to hear others read it. The cost of a copy of the Great Bible was equivalent to fifty dollars or more of our money, Seven large editions were sold within two years. During the later years of King Henry's reign there was a reaction against the circulation of the Scriptures, and stern measures were adopted to prevent their being read. This was reversed under his successor, Edward VI, when every clergyman was ordered to procure a copy of the Bible and set it up where it might be read by his parishioners. During this short reign, at least thirteen editions of the Bible and thirty-five of the New Testament were published. With the accession of Mary the reading of the Bible was again prohibited, and many who, like Cranmer and Rogers, had helped in its translation, perished at the stake.

The next translation appeared in 1560. It was called the Genevan Version, from the fact that it was the work of Protestant refugees from England who had been attracted to Geneva by the fame of Calvin. Having been brought into contact here with what continental scholars

had been doing for the exposition of the Word of God, some of them conceived and carried out the idea of a fresh and more correct English translation. This new version was dedicated to Queen Elizabeth, and it remained the Bible of the people for nearly a hundred years. It was very popular, at least one hundred and fifty editions being issued. For accuracy and scholarship, the Genevan Version is the best translation preceding the Authorized Version. Its main interest is that, for the first time the text is broken up into verses instead of paragraphs as formerly, and also that italics were used to indicate what words were not in the original but had been supplied in the translation. The superiority of the Genevan Version over the Great Bible—which was recognized by the church of England as the standard—and its growing popularity, led to a scheme for a revision of Coverdale's work by a number of Anglican divines. Most of them being bishops, their revision, published in 1568, was called the Bishops' Bible. The only reason it held its place so long in the church was the fact that it was the only version recognized by the Convocation. The Psalter was practically a new translation and very unpopular.

At length a Roman Catholic translation of the Bible appeared. The leaders of that Church realized that the Bible would be read in England regardless of papal prohibitions. Fearing lest the notes found in the popular editions might lead men to question the doctrines and practices of Rome, it was decided to have a Bible of their own. Accordingly the scholars of the English seminary at Douai, France, set about making it. The New Testament was issued at Rheims in 1582, and the Old Testament at Douai in 1609. Hence the work is often

spoken of as the Rhemish, or the Rheims and Douai version. This translation, revised about 1750, is still the authorized Roman Catholic Bible. The translation was from the Latin Vulgate, of which it was a faithful rendering, although the Vulgate itself sadly needed revision. The reason for the use of the Vulgate was that this Latin version had been made before the Greek and Hebrew had been "foully corrupted by Jews and heretics." The notes connected with this version seem to aim less at giving a clear and fair explanation of the text than at supporting the traditions and errors of Rome, and at condemning, wherever possible, the Reformed teaching. This is the version which is popularly known as the Douai Bible.

The King James or Authorized Version of the Bible, which has for nearly three hundred years been in common use, appeared in 1611. One of the first acts of James on ascending the English throne was to take steps looking to a new translation of the Scriptures. The Great Bible was still used in some places, the Bishops' Bible was that of the Church, the Genevan that of the people. As the variations in these translations were calculated to lead to confusion and distrust, it was thought that there should be one uniform translation which all the people should use. The king therefore appointed a commission of fifty-four of the most learned divines of the realm to act as translators. The final list, as a matter of fact, contained only forty-seven names. Little is known regarding the performance of the work, save what is mentioned in the translator's preface. Minute instructions, so as to insure thorough work, were given. It was begun in 1607 and occupied two years and nine months, being finally issued in 1611. No labor was spared to make the translation per-

fect. All previous English versions were laid under contribution, while foreign versions were carefully studied as well as the Hebrew and the Greek. It was a great work and did credit to the scholarship of the day. The aim was to keep it free from any sectarian bias. It was dedicated to King James. No marginal notes were admitted save such as were needed to explain Greek and Hebrew words. Headings of chapters were inserted to give a summary of the contents of each chapter. In the use of italics the translators followed the Genevan Version.

This translation was a great improvement on all previous versions of Scripture. It gathered into itself all their excellencies. Never before had such care been expended on the English Bible. The revisers of the translation of the New Testament of 1881 say: "We have had to study this great version carefully and minutely, line by line; and the longer we have been engaged upon it, the more we have to admire its simplicity, its dignity, its power, its happy turns of expression, its general accuracy, and we must not fail to add, the music of its cadences and the felicity of its rhythm." It was appointed to be read in all the churches of the time. Before fifty years had passed, it had won its way to the hearts of the English people, this mainly because it was intrinsically superior to all other versions.

Toward the close of the last century, or after King James' Version (1611) had been in use nearly three hundred years, the conviction had become widespread that the time was ripe for a thorough revision of it. The need of such revision had long been recognized. Since that version was issued, many new manuscripts, including the

three oldest—the Alexandrian, the Vatican, and the Sinaitic—had been discovered, and greater accuracy of translation was now rendered possible. Large progress, too, had been made in scholarship. The sacred languages were better understood. Archeological investigations had thrown new light upon the meaning of many Scripture passages. Furthermore, in the natural growth of the English language itself, many modifications had taken place, by which not a few words of the old version had become obsolete and several hundreds of others had so changed their meaning as seriously to affect the significance of some important passages.

Accordingly, the Convocation of Canterbury, England, in 1870, took steps to secure such revision. A company of English scholars, representing different religious bodies, was appointed for the work, and a similar undenominational company of American scholars was invited to join in the undertaking. Each section of the Revision Committee thus constituted, the English and the American, was to work by itself, the results of their labors to be mutually examined and criticised. One part of each section took the Old Testament, the other the New. The agreement was, that respecting all points of difference, the English company, which had taken the initiative in the movement, should have the decisive vote. As an offset to this, the American preferences were to be published in an appendix to the revised Bible. The results of the combined labors of the English and American revisers of the New Testament were given to the world in 1881. The Old Testament appeared four years later, in 1885. The publication was awaited with great interest, and it is said that in this country two million copies of

the revised New Testament were disposed of in a single week. The entire New Testament was sent by telegraph from New York to Chicago for publication in the Daily Tribune.

In accuracy this work is a great advance upon King James' Version. Numerous changes were made, but only after the most thorough consideration, and yet they do not affect any doctrine of our faith. The old arrangement of paragraphs rather than verses in the division of the text was followed, the chapters and verses being indicated in the margin. In the poetical books, the parallelism which was the main feature of Hebrew poetry, was indicated. The headings of chapters were left out entirely. In the New Testament, some texts were omitted because they are not found in the original manuscripts, while others were altered to correspond with the discoveries of modern scholarship. Fewer changes were made in the Old Testament than in the New. There was not the same reason for making them. Taken as a whole, the revised Old Testament is a decided improvement upon King James' version. No previous revision ever had such advantages as this. It was not intended to be a new translation, but a revision, rather, of the existing version, in the light of the progress in scholarship and Biblical knowledge. The New Testament is substantially the same as that of Wycliffe and Tyndale, although they did not have access to the manuscripts which are at present available.

Yet with all the excellencies of this revision, there was room for improvement. The American revisers had pledged themselves to give no sanction, for a period of fourteen years, to any other editions of it than those

issued under English auspices. This agreement, however, did not prohibit them from continuing their organization and from laboring to perfect their work. It was felt that a recension of the English revision might eventually be called for, with a transference of the American preferences from the appendix to the text not only, but the introduction of such other improvements as might commend themselves to their united judgment. As a matter of fact, such a demand became increasingly manifest, not only in this country but in England. Accordingly in 1901 an American edition of the revision was issued. While retaining the main features of that work, some notable changes have been made. The American preferences have, for the most part, been incorporated in the text. In the Old Testament, the word "Jehovah" is substituted for "Lord" and "God." "Sheol" is used where the English revisers retained "the grave," "the pit," and "hell." Changes in the interest of grammatical accuracy have been adopted, and modern spelling takes the place of antiquated forms. Marginal references to parallel and illustrative passages, and topical headings, have been introduced. There have been some alterations in paragraphing, and numerous changes in punctuation. Altogether it is believed that this American edition will bring a plain reader more closely into contact with the exact thought of the sacred writers, than any version now current in Christendom. The work is a marked improvement upon the English edition preceding, and is a monument to American scholarship. It has been most favorably received, and its use will doubtless become more and more general.

We have now completed our survey of the history of the Bible, have told the story of the discovery of the three great manuscripts by means of which the older versions have been corrected, and have traced the changes which have been made in Wycliffe's version and those which succeeded it, to those which have been given to the world during the last quarter of a century. We can hardly fail to have been impressed by the providential preservation of the sacred Word during all these ages. The cost in labor, in sacrifice, in suffering, sometimes even to martyrdom, of securing its publication and circulation in a tongue which the people could understand, and as true to the original as the condition of scholarship at the time could make it, suggests the debt of gratitude we owe for our English version to the loyalty of Christian scholars to the truth, and to their zeal in its study and proclamation.

A book of such a nature, with such a history, occupying such a place in the thought and life of men, and secured to us at such a price, is certainly deserving of the most careful, thorough and constant study.

## 2.

## PERSONAL USE AND STUDY OF THE BIBLE.

When we consider what the Bible is, the nature of its teachings, their authoritative character in regard to those things which are of most vital concern to men, things having to do with their highest interests in this life and the life beyond, it would seem as if no book would be in such demand, would be more generally read and studied, as if exhortation and urging to do this would be unnecessary. It would seem as if Christian people, of all others, would certainly be drawn to it, would be eager to read it, to feed upon it, to imbibe its spirit, to make it the man of their counsel and the law of their lives. Yet as a matter of fact, with all the emphasis which is laid upon its importance, with all the prominence which is given to it in the Sunday School, at Bible Institutes, and in the pulpit, with all the influence which it has exerted from a literary point of view, and with all the efforts which are made to promote a deeper and more general interest in it, it is surprising how comparatively little popular interest in Bible reading and study, to say nothing of zeal for them, there actually is. Indeed, if all the facts with reference to the popular neglect of the Bible, even by those who recognize some obligation in the matter, were known, just as they are and as investigation has sometimes disclosed, the revelation would be astonishing, even appalling. To call for an expression of practice on this point in any company of Christian people might occasion embarrassment. In too many cases it would doubtless be found that the only

Scripture which comes before their minds during the entire week, is the Scripture lesson which is read at the morning or evening service in the sanctuary. Now and then one may be discovered with a real relish for the Bible. Individual Christians here and there may feed upon it eagerly, a few may study it with some degree of system, occasionally a thorough-going Bible student may be found. The number of all these is doubtless large in the aggregate, perhaps larger now than ever before, but in comparison with the entire body of Christian people, the proportion is surprisingly small.

Why is this? Why is it that the most remarkable book in the world, which concerns men so momentously, is so widely neglected, even by many who profess to accept its teachings? There must be some reason for such a state of things.

### I. Why the Bible is Neglected.

One reason for neglecting the Bible, which would probably be suggested by multitudes of Christian people, is that they are too busy, have not time to attend to it. Domestic, social, business or public interests press upon them so urgently that when this pressure has been met they find little strength or inclination for anything else.

No doubt there is truth in this. As things are in social life and in the stress and competitions of business, the minds of many are quite likely to be absorbingly occupied. Everything is strenuous, these days. But the question might fairly be raised whether any one ought to allow himself to become so absorbed in other interests,

however seemingly pressing, as to render impossible a proper attention to the highest concerns of his being; or whether, if one really desired to do so, one could not somehow arrange to set apart a few minutes each day for Bible reading; or whether, in spite of the pressure, most people do not find time to read a vast deal more than is really necessary in order to make themselves acquainted with current affairs and current thought as they are given us in the morning and evening daily papers, especially in the forty- and fifty-paged Sunday editions, or in the popular magazines, or in the more important books of the day? Is not the *real* reason for neglecting the word of God to be found in something deeper than in the mere fact of being so occupied with business affairs as to have no time for it?

Another reason, perhaps, for existing indifference to the Bible, especially among young people, may be traced to a lack of wise suggestion and instruction as to the best methods of reading and studying it, and a failure to encourage them to carry out these methods. People are told that they ought to read the Bible, but they are not told how to read it or where, perhaps are left to think that they should begin at the beginning and read straight through to Revelation, including all the prophets and epistles, few of which can be clearly understood without some outside assistance; or they are left to suppose that haphazard reading is the thing,—a chapter anywhere, regardless of its connections. No wonder they are not interested. With them, going to the Word of God is much like one's going into a strange country, with a strange language, strange customs, everything different from that to which one has been accustomed; or

like going into a city of whose streets and thoroughfares one knows nothing. It is not strange, in such circumstances, that one does not feel at home. With some explanations and directions beforehand, it would be known what to expect, and to adjust one's mind to the new and strange situation would be rendered far less difficult. So with no attempt on the part of any one to give instruction in regard to the Bible beforehand, no directions how to read and study it to advantage, it is not strange that there is bewilderment on the part of those who would become interested in it, that children and young people grow up without relish for the Bible, and read it, if at all, only from a sense of duty and in the most perfunctory and least beneficial way, or as a kind of penance. A good Christian woman of quite mature years, once remarked to her pastor that she "never could understand the Bible, never could get interested in it." The probability is that her reading of the sacred Word had been of the usual haphazard sort, that she had never received any instructions either in early life or later as to the way to read the Bible, and so had never become sufficiently interested in it to derive practical benefit from it; least of all really to be drawn to it with eager desire.

It is not strange that many persons fail at once to appreciate the more didactic portions of the Bible, or that those whose experience of life and its burdens has been limited, fail at the outset to understand the full significance of the promises or know how practically to appropriate them. One of the most serious failures in our churches is the failure to give definite instruction in such methods of reading the Bible as will awaken interest and create an abiding relish for it.

Another reason, possibly, which has its influence upon some, perhaps without their being clearly conscious of it, for lack of interest in the Word of God, may grow out of prevailing misconceptions and prejudices and a subtle skepticism in regard to it. From disparaging remarks heard upon the streets, or flippant paragraphs read in the papers, or seemingly plausible objections raised against it with a semblance of learning by men of shallow acquirements, many persons have come to entertain an entirely wrong idea of what the Bible is and is for. Some Christian people even appear not entirely to have escaped the influence of such sneers, or of this skeptical spirit which seems to pervade the very air. While they may not be ready to give up their confidence in the Bible or to deny its authority, they have come to regard it with some degree of suspicion, at least to look upon it as an antiquated book, not up with the times, or not intended for the present age; as containing more or less of errors, with a goodly portion of its contents open to question; or it is regarded as an unnatural, an unreal book, unadapted to the conditions in which we now live. Thus their interest in it is diminished, their confidence in it is undermined, they are prejudiced against it, at any rate are in no condition to approach it with an open, unbiased mind, ready to appreciate its contents.

Yet as a matter of fact, and a remarkable fact it is, the Bible, although the oldest of books, is far from being antiquated, unnatural, or unreal. On the contrary, it has proved its adaptedness to every age, not even excepting our own. More light is constantly breaking forth from its pages, and more and more it is seen to be precisely what is needed to help solve the special problems

of our own times. As well speak of the sun as being old and out of date! The Bible is antiquated only in the sense that it was written a long time ago, and that it sometimes sets forth a condition of things which belongs to a former period. But when it comes to the principles it inculcates, or to the teachings of Christ in which all its main principles are gathered up, it is the most up-to-date book extant. The same is true in regard to its power of meeting the profounder needs of human nature. Nowhere are those needs so perfectly met as in the Word of God. Nowhere are the experiences of human life more fully and accurately set forth, nowhere are the deep questions of the soul so satisfactorily answered as in its pages. If there is any book which is a book for all time and for the millions, that book is the Bible, having to do as it does, with the most practical concerns of every day life, with all classes of people, with all conditions of society.

But while all these reasons may have their place in accounting for this widespread indifference, even among Christian people, as to Bible reading and study, doubtless the primary reason, the one which strikes at the root of the difficulty, is to be found in the low spiritual condition of many Christian people and many Christian churches. The most vital things in the Bible, those which are spiritual, are only spiritually discerned, so that without spirituality, even to Christian people, the Bible must necessarily remain a sealed and an uninteresting book. The spiritual part of our nature is often dulled, blunted, and made incapable of appreciating the highest things, through the influence of an all-pervasive secularism. The fundamental difficulty is not in the Bible itself, but in

the disposition of those who read it. To the spiritually minded it is, they affirm, the most interesting book in the world. They neither become weary of it, nor lose their interest in what it has to say. We all know that after a spiritual quickening on our part, the pages of the Bible are luminous as with the light of heaven. So that it may be laid down as a fact not to be disputed, that the more men have of the spirit of God in their hearts, or the more alive they are spiritually, the more they will be drawn to the Word of God. To create a genuine interest in Bible reading and study, spirituality is of prime importance. Other things may be helpful; this is fundamental.

## II. Reasons for Studying the Bible.

These general considerations, which, however, by no means exhaust the subject, will prepare the way for noting a few positive and practical reasons for devoting time and attention, especially on the part of Christian people, to the thorough reading and study of the Bible.

The first and most important of these reasons is suggested by Christ himself. Whether we read His words, (John 5:39) "Search the Scriptures," as in the old version, or, "Ye search the Scriptures," as in the new, the importance indicated is the same: "because that in them ye think ye have eternal life, and these are they which testify of me." They tell us about Christ, about the conditions of human salvation, about eternal life. They are our authority in spiritual things. They furnish nourishment to the spiritual nature. They tell us how to live in this world, just as the chart of the mariner tells us how safely to navigate the ocean. Without the directions

of the Bible, men's lives would be in constant peril of shipwreck.

Furthermore, the Bible and it alone, makes a clear disclosure of the future. Every one longs to penetrate beyond the veil which hides it from his gaze. But the only certain light that comes from the unseen world, beams from the Scripture page. Men often think, or act as if they thought, that the interests of this life and the needs of the body were of more importance than those of the future and of the soul. Admitting their importance, relatively the body is of far less value than the soul, the present life than the future. When the soul has fled, how worthless is the tabernacle it once occupied. A mansion of a wealthy English lady was burned to the ground. It contained a diamond necklace worth far more than the building which had been destroyed. After careful search among the ashes, the diamonds were found uninjured, brilliant and beautiful as ever. Similarly the soul survives the destruction of the body. What wonder that Christ, while not neglecting the material part of those who heard Him, sought mainly to minister to their spiritual needs, sought after that "pearl of great price" which apparently had been lost among the ruins which sin had made. What study can be more important then, than that which has primarily to do with the enduring part of man's being?

But this is not all. It is not enough that the soul be barely saved. Christ made it plain that He would have men grow inwardly, nourish and develop the spiritual part of their nature. He would have them make the care of the soul the great business of their lives. Just as we take pains to develop the intellect by years of

schooling, so would Christ have men develop their spiritual capacities by feeding upon the Word of God. It is by reading it, thinking about it, imbibing its spirit, practicing its precepts, that this growth is secured. More than this, there is something in the Word of God which is precisely fitted to the needs of every one. There is no situation in life, no adversity, no ordeal, no time of want, for which there is not some appropriate, encouraging, hope-inspiring message. However dark the over-shadowing clouds, however great and seemingly insurmountable the obstacles in the way, divine guidance is vouchsafed to the trusting one. In one way or another every case is met, and by diligent reading and study the treasures of the sacred Word may be discovered. In this way, too, a sense of the reality of God's love for his children, his personal interest and providential care, will grow upon one, and the desires of his heart be increasingly realized.

Again, there is the duty of communicating to others,—"Freely ye received, freely give." This duty of imparting to others a knowledge of that salvation which has come to us, and which has been made more blessed by constant meditation, is of prime importance.

The value of the Bible in literature is another reason why we should make ourselves familiar with it. If this is not the highest reason, it is by no means unimportant. In the realm of literature, the Bible, by common consent, holds the highest position. The first great division of it is the noblest literary monument of a race. The contents of the Bible have embedded themselves in the great literature of the past. They have impressed themselves powerfully upon the leading thinkers of every age. The influence of the Bible on civilization has been irresistible.

A vast literature has grown up about it. The libraries of the world are full of books which relate to it, or have sprung from its suggestions. Hardly a book of a standard character can be intelligently read without a knowledge of Scripture phrases and story. All our English poets are heavily indebted to the Bible. Such poets as Spencer, Milton, Pope, Scott, Cooper, Wordsworth, Tennyson, Browning, Longfellow; prose writers like Bacon, Macaulay, Irving, Ruskin, Lowell; orators like Webster, Lincoln, Sumner, have made large use of the Scriptures. A book on Shakspeare's knowledge and use of the Bible, finds allusions to it or quotations from it in thirty-seven of his plays. These are only explained by the older and greater book. Bacon quotes from it or alludes to it in nearly every one of his essays. Macaulay's writings abound in Scriptural allusions. Ruskin confesses that he owes to his early memorizing of chapters and psalms, much that is good not only in his style, but also in his thoughts and in himself. There are one hundred allusions to the Bible in "Aurora Leigh," and three hundred distinct references to it in Tennyson's poems. There are even more in Longfellow's. Such facts as these constitute a strong reason why every one, certainly every student, should seek to become familiar with a book which is the fountain head of all that is noblest and best in the literature of the world. The intelligence of our day, indeed, demands of all persons who would be respected for their culture, a full and familiar acquaintance with the Bible.

Another reason, or an encouragement rather, for reading and studying the Bible, is that it is, or may be made, the most interesting and attractive of all books. This is

because of the variety of topics treated in it, its wealth of material, the beauty of its illustrations, and the helps of every kind which are now available for throwing light upon it. Whatever the peculiarities of men's tastes, here they have something to correspond with them. Whatever their spiritual needs, here they have been met. The stories of Genesis, for instance,—and the same is true of the early historical books—abound in lessons for our time. The book of Judges, rude as is the age to which it refers, contains not a few exceedingly instructive narrations. "For merely human interest," says Stanley, "for the lively touches of ancient manners, for the succession of romantic incidents, for the consciousness that we are living face to face with the persons described, there is nothing like the history of the Judges from Othniel to Eli." Another writer says:—"The history contained in the Bible, under the stern test of the critics and the monuments, is found to be of no small worth. This knowledge alone is an interesting and inestimable contribution to the world."

Esther reads like a romance, giving a marvelous illustration of the unseen hand of God operating in human affairs, showing how the most minute events are woven into his plan. The little book of Ruth is exquisite in its pastoral simplicity, giving us glimpses into the life of Jewish people at the time to which it refers. An interesting story of this book is referred to in Dr. W. M. Taylor's "Ruth and Esther." "It is said," he remarks, "that Dr. Franklin was once in the company of several ladies of the English nobility when the conversation turned upon pastoral poetry. The ladies took a considerable part in the discussion, and after hearing their criticism on various authors, the doctor offered to read the

translation of a pastoral for their amusement. He read, with a few verbal alterations, the book of Ruth. They were enraptured, pronounced it the finest they had ever heard from any language, and insisted upon knowing whose it was. Imagine their confusion when he told them that he read it from the Bible.

What choice poetry we have in the Old Testament. One-third of it is in this form. The fact that the Psalms express the varying emotions of the soul, accounts for their abiding freshness. They put into language that which all persons feel at times, but cannot well express. Many of them are exquisitely beautiful. The book of Job is a great poem,—an exceedingly beautiful drama. Then there is the book of Proverbs, usually regarded as dry, but full of attraction for the real Bible student. It is a book of maxims which have outlived the ages, a summing up of the thoughts and experiences of centuries. Solomon wrote many of them, and collected many more. Nor was he unwise in this, for a proverb represents the gist of the experience of a long life, just as a little bit of honey represents the toil of an entire season for a bee.

Then there are the prophetic books, those of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, constituting each in itself a great work, while those of the minor prophets, though little understood, are full of rich thought and noble purpose if read in the light of their times. The epistles of the New Testament also, when illuminated by such preliminary information as modern scholarship affords, abound for us in the choicest spiritual treasures. The gospels, each written for a different object and for a different class of people, give us pictures and impressions of the life

and mission of Christ which we cannot afford to lose. Never before was so much study given to them, nor was ever such abundant material to assist in the study of them available. Even the Apocalypse, with its poetic imagery, its visions of heaven, and its songs of triumph, comes to persecuted and troubled Christians of every age with words of comfort and hope. The Bible, then, may be safely affirmed to be the most interesting book, or series of books, ever written.

Still another reason for interesting ourselves in the Bible may be found in the increasing attention which it is receiving throughout the Christian world both among scholars and people generally. This interest is still far from what it ought to be or will be, but the fact of its existence should lead us as Christian people to put forth every effort within our power to make ourselves familiar with the Word of God in all its aspects, remembering always, that "to know it in any other way than to its depths, is to fail of that complete knowledge which we may all have for the asking."

These, then, are some of the reasons why the Word of God should be diligently and appreciatively read and studied.

## III. Methods of Bible Study.

Assuming that one is desirous of mastering the contents of the Bible, though the time at his disposal be limited, what methods of reading or study shall he adopt? How take up the work in a way to lead to the most definite and tangible results? First of all, let him secure an attractive, well-bound, well-printed copy of the Bible. This has not a little to do with maintaining an interest

in it. To attempt to read some of the fine print Bibles which many possess, is much like doing penance. These persons would never for a moment think of reading any other book of similar type. The American edition of the Revised Version is undoubtedly now the most accurate and the best of all. Possibly, since Bibles are cheap, one may desire to possess a more costly copy than that in daily use, to which he can transfer, from time to time, such marking of texts or marginal notes as he may desire permanently to preserve. This second Bible will soon become a treasure house of spiritual knowledge and spiritual experience, a memorial of spiritual victories—Bethels, Peniels and Ebenezers,—in one's earthly pilgrimage. As helps, one might suggest a concordance, a topical text-book, a Bible dictionary, and, if one's Bible is not furnished with maps, an atlas of Bible lands. Sparingly used, hand books of the Bible, with brief introductions to each of the separate books and with analyses of their contents, together with a few judiciously selected commentaries, will furnish an equipment for years of study. A danger which should always be guarded against, from having too many helps, is that one will be tempted to read the helps in place of the Bible itself. Of course if the student can afford it, other and more extended works for reference than those mentioned may be possessed and employed to advantage, but an adequate outfit for effective Bible study need not necessarily be either large or costly. If one has studied the original Hebrew and Greek so as to be reasonably familiar with them, so much the better.

When practicable, some portion of the day should be set apart for the reading of the Bible, for the Bible can-

not be read to advantage without some system. It is often helpful to read it with other persons of similar taste. Just as there are clubs for the reading and study of Shakspeare, or circles for the reading of the standard authors, Chautauqua circles for pursuing prescribed courses of study, so should there be circles or clubs for the systematic reading or study of the Bible. A brief experience in this direction will be sufficient to show its value.

The Bible should be studied honestly. We may neither read our own ideas into it, nor seek to draw from it novel or unusual interpretations. The Bible comes to men with a message from God in such simple and plain language as can be readily understood. No absolute and unvarying rules for reading it can be given. The wisest course to pursue is for each person to follow that plan of reading and study which is best suited to his temperament, or taste, or to the time at his disposal, and the helps at his command. This method may be changed as the objects to be gained change, or as one may have the advantage of competent instructors.

Most important of all is a definite, settled purpose to pursue this study, not for one year, but for life. To make it most valuable it should be carried on in a prayerful spirit. It is to study it for the highest ends, and the spiritual ends are the highest.

A method of reading the Bible—if it can be called a method—which is very common, may be termed *the haphazard method,* reading here and there as the whim seizes one, or wherever the Bible happens to be opened. Such a plan, especially if pursued with a view to be-

coming familiar with the Scriptures, has little to commend it. Some benefit may no doubt be derived from it. There are many sections and chapters which are sufficiently disconnected with other portions to be read understandingly by themselves. But for the most part, the different portions are so related to each other and to the book of which they form a part, that only meager benefit, relatively, is derived from reading them disconnectedly. After one has become somewhat familiar with the contents of the entire Bible and with the relation of its separate parts, he may then find profit in reading wherever his inclination points the way.

There is the old-fashioned way of *reading the Bible through consecutively,*—i. e., beginning with Genesis and reading every book in order to Revelation. This is far from being the best way of reading the Bible, but with some modifications it is not altogether a bad way. Many things are to be said in its favor, especially if one were to take the first half of the Old Testament, the historical or narrative part, or the narrative portion of the New Testament, and read them through in order. By this means one might gain a general knowledge of the Bible in so far as the history contained in it, or the story of it is concerned. This can be read intelligently without the aid of commentaries or other helps, although it would add to the interest if books of reference were at hand to explain customs or allusions not entirely clear. Other parts of the Bible, like the prophetic portions of the Old Testament and the epistles of the New, require some explanation of their historical settings in order to an intelligent grasp of their significance. By this plan of consecutive reading of the historical or narrative parts of

the Bible, one may become familiar with those interesting, often thrilling Old Testament stories, which everybody is supposed to understand, of Abraham, Joseph in Egypt, Moses and the Exodus, Joshua and the Conquest; of Samuel, David, Solomon, Ezra and Nehemiah. Any one of these narratives may be read by itself with profit, and the more they are read, the more they grow upon one. The same is true of the gospels. We cannot become too familiar with the story of Jesus Christ. What thrilling accounts are given in the Acts of the work of the apostles, especially of the apostle Paul! Really it is not so large or so difficult an undertaking as is sometimes imagined, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the narrative part of the Bible.

Another method of Bible reading or study may be termed *the chronological,* or the distinctively *historical method.* It is not simply to gain familiarity with the connected narrative, it is to gain this knowledge in its chronological relations and in its historical bearings. It is to understand the historical positions of the various books of the Bible with reference to the narrative, to gain some idea also of history contemporary with that of the Bible. One may, for instance, get a few of the main landmarks of the Bible fixed definitely in mind, like the time of Abraham, the Exodus, the rise of the Kingdom, the Captivity, the Return. Then other events will readily fall into their proper place. The historical part of the Old Testament closes with Ezra and Nehemiah. The chronological order is mainly observed up to this point, or from Genesis to Kings at least,—not absolutely, but in general. The remaining books, the poetical, like the Psalms, Job, and the prophets, belong to the different eras, although

they form a collection by themselves. It is not entirely clear in every instance just where their historical place is, yet this can usually be determined with sufficient accuracy. It would add much to read these books in connection with the contemporary events of secular history, with which they are associated. In the New Testament the epistles of Paul and others are to be inserted at different points in the book of Acts and at its close. Paul's epistles fall into groups of four or five, generally, and these groups were written a few years apart. It is a good plan first to read the historical portions of both the Old and New Testament before attempting the other and more difficult books.

Or the Bible may be definitely studied by the great *periods* into which it naturally divides itself. There is an advantage in this. Let one take up a great period like that covered by the first eleven chapters of Genesis, or the period of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, or of the sojourn in Egypt, or of the exodus, the wanderings and the conquest, or of the Judges, or of the kingdom, or of the captivity, or of the return, then the period between the Old Testament and the New; in the New Testament,—first, the time of Christ; second, that covered by the book of Acts. Then let the books relating to such period be determined, read and studied in the light of their historical settings, and it will be surprising how luminous they will become. Too much stress can hardly be laid upon the importance of the historical and chronological method of Bible study.

Another way to study the Bible is by topics—*the topical method.* It is to select some subject like God's love, or the great subject of the Bible—redemption, or a doc-

trine like faith, repentance, grace, the Holy Spirit, righteousness, sin, prayer, peace, hope, joy, eternal life, or some practical question concerning which instruction is desired,—then by the aid of a concordance or a reference and text-book, to go through the whole Bible and find out the passages which bear upon it. In this way the whole sweep of the Bible teaching on a particular topic is brought before the mind. It is surprising what enlarged views of the subject in hand are gained in this way. If the investigation is pursued chronologically, i. e., taking the books in their chronological order and examining the passages which they contain, it will be seen how gradually each doctrine has unfolded, becoming larger, richer, fuller with the years. All revelation is progressive. One gains a new conception of this as one traces these topics down through the centuries of the Old Testament and into the more full-orbed teachings of Christ in the New. Many of the doctrines merely bud in the Old Testament. They blossom out in the New. For thorough study, each passage is to be examined in its place, in its settings, or in the light of the circumstances of the times. This would of course involve more extensive investigation than would be possible for most general students. It is a method which is coming into growing prominence in theological seminaries in connection with what is called Biblical Theology. It is easy to see what an advantage, for instance, would follow, from an examination of all the Old Testament passages which relate to the Messiah or to the Messianic times. This topical method of Bible study has many features of interest and profit.

Another method still, which is really but another

phase of the topical method, may be termed the *biographical,* or the study of the Bible by characters. It is to study it around biographical centers. For example, take characters like Abraham, Moses, David, Elijah, Nehemiah, John the Baptist, Peter, Paul, or John the apostle, then endeavor to master all the Bible has to say about them, study the age, the circumstances, and related matters of interest from every source. Out of all these facts it will not be difficult to form a clear conception of the character and spirit of the men of the Bible, and to make oneself master of the entire narrative of the Bible. Practical lessons for life and conduct will also be constantly suggested.

Another method of Bible study, the most fruitful of all if thoroughly carried out, and the most important too if one would gain a comprehensive understanding of the Bible as a whole, is the study of it by *books.* This is the foundation, indeed, and the condition of the best success in every other method. It is to take each book by itself and to study it in its historical settings. It is to become familiar with the circumstances which called it out, with the writer, the persons addressed, and the object which the writer had in view; or as Dr. A. T. Pierson suggests: "Let the introduction cover five P.'s; place where written; person by whom written; people to whom written; purpose for which written; period at which written." It is to discover the plan of the book, its main divisions, its full analysis, its connection with other books, and its relation to the revelation of God as a whole. All these considerations will have a most important bearing upon the interpretation of the book. Many of the books of the Bible, in fact, can only be understood in the light of

these historical settings. If one would gain the largest, most satisfactory knowledge of the contents of the Bible, this is the method to select, taking all the books in succession, the method varying in each case as might be necessary to correspond with the nature of the book. Then if one writes out, even roughly, the results of his investigations, it will add immensely to the value of his study, helping to fix all in memory and facilitating a review of his work at any time.

There is no more interesting, fascinating and rewarding study in the world, than the study of the Bible, carried on intelligently, systematically and perseveringly. It is an exhaustless study. It opens out continually into wider and richer fields. The best minds, the ablest scholars, have found it so. It yields many other than spiritual benefits, although the spiritual benefits are the most important.

# II

# Study of the Bible by Periods.

# FOREWORD.

There is not a section of the history of the chosen people which is not interesting in itself, or which does not present great truths pertaining to the providential government of God. These lessons and truths are as applicable in the affairs of men and of nations today as they were in the olden time. This is true whether we consider the Patriarchal age by itself, that of the Exodus and the Conquest, the periods of the Judges, the Monarchy, the Captivity, the Restoration, or the New Testament era. A review of any one of these periods will help to render the narrative more vivid, to fix important facts in the mind, and to clinch the instructive lessons which it is designed to teach. Nor will it be found difficult to grasp, in outline, the entire biblical narrative. By dividing the whole into a few great periods and mastering the essential facts of each in succession, which is strongly recommended, a bird's eye view over the whole wide field may be gained and retained. This is made clear in the first part of the chapter which follows.

A good example of the study of the Bible by periods is afforded by that portion of the history of the chosen people which has to do with the organizing or making of the Hebrew nation after the exodus from Egypt. Because of its ultimate relation to everything in the Bible which follows, it is the most important section of Old Testament history for the student of the Scriptures to understand. Yet it is one of which comparatively few people have any adequate knowledge. Such a study—as illustrated in the second part of the chapter—will not only prove instructive and rewarding in itself, but will be found suggestive as to how other periods of Bible history may be studied. One should have a good map before him for frequent and careful consultation, and all Scripture references should be looked up with painstaking care.

## STUDY OF THE BIBLE BY PERIODS.

Who does not recall how for many years the history of the chosen people seemed to him a confused jumble? The possibility of mastering the narrative as a whole, to say nothing of being able to locate the leading books of the Bible at the proper points in that narrative and of grasping their aim and scope, hardly entered the mind. The consequence was that large sections of the sacred Word, particularly of the Old Testament, like vast portions of the interior of Africa as represented on the old maps, were to him as "unexplored territory." Yet if one would acquire a broad and intelligent knowledge of the Word of God, one must first of all gain a clear and connected idea of the Scripture narrative as a whole, or a comprehensive view of the general framework of the Bible. Nor is this so difficult or complicated a matter as is sometimes imagined. The narrative portion embraces hardly more than half of the Bible. By fixing clearly in the mind a few of the more prominent landmarks of the story, the details will readily fall into their proper place, just as iron filings gather about a magnet.

Genesis, for example, has to do with the beginning of things, creation, our first parents, the flood, the dispersion, the story of the patriarchs; Exodus and Numbers relate to the period when Moses was leading Israel out of Egyptian bondage to the borders of the promised land; in Joshua we have an account of its conquest and settle-

ment; Judges and part of First Samuel cover the period succeeding the conquest, when there was no central government, only a tribal organization among the people; the remainder of First Samuel, Second Samuel, the books of Kings and Chronicles, give us the story of the monarchy from Saul to Solomon, of the division of the kingdom under Rehoboam, the final destruction, at different periods, of the two kingdoms thus formed, and the captivity of their people. Ezra and Nehemiah belong to the period of the restoration from the exile. The prophetic and other books were mostly written during the period of the two kingdoms, although some of them belong to that of the exile and return. If we make ourselves familiar with the history of the early church as given in the book of Acts, we shall have little difficulty in determining the time and the circumstances in which most of the epistles were written. The historical portion of the Bible is of comparatively small dimensions. In the New Testament we have five historical books, and in the Old Testament only fifteen even if we include those to which the term historical is somewhat doubtfully applied.

## I. A Bird's Eye View of Bible History.

In considering the subject before us of the study of the Bible by periods, it will be of advantage, first of all, to gain a bird's eye view over the entire field. This we may do by dividing the whole into a few great periods or epochs, indicating the essential facts and events in each case and noting contemporary history when possible. We shall then be the better prepared to take up a single period by itself as an example or suggestion of how each period

may be treated, in this way to grasp, at length, in outline, the entire biblical narrative.

While each student will naturally divide the Scripture history into periods to suit himself, the following division is suggested as one which is simple and not difficult to remember.

1. *From Creation to Israel in Egypt.* (Genesis.)
   (1) Creation to Abraham.
   (2) The Patriarchs. (Abraham-Joseph.)

2. *From Israel in Egypt to Israel in Canaan.*
   (1) Israel in Egypt.
   (2) The Exodus and the Wilderness. (Ex., Num.)
   (3) The Conquest of Canaan. (Joshua.)

3. *From the Conquest to the Division of the Kingdom.*
   (1) The Age of the Judges. (Bk. of Judges.)
   (2) The Single Monarchy. (Under Saul, David, and Solomon.) (1 and 2 Sam., I K. ch. 1-11, 1 Chron., 2 Chron. ch. 1-9.)

4. *From the Division of the Kingdom to the Exile.*
   (1) The Northern Kingdom and Fall of Samaria.
   (2) The Southern Kingdom and Fall of Jerusalem. (1 Kings, ch. 12-22, 2 Kings, 2 Chron. ch. 10-36.)

5. *From the Exile to the Advent.*
   (1) The Captivity. (2 Kings, 25, Jer. 52, Ezek.)
   (2) The Return. (Ezra, Neh.)
   (3) Between the Old Test. and the New.

6. *From Advent of Christ to Close of New Testament Period.* (100 yrs.)
   (1) Christ. (The Four Gospels.)
   (2) The Apostles. (Acts, Epistles, Rev.)

We will dwell briefly upon each of these periods.

1. The first period extends from the Creation to Israel in Egypt. (Genesis.) (1.) The first eleven chapters of Genesis embody the traditions, more or less elaborated, among the Hebrews, with reference to the early history of the world and its inhabitants. They are all richly suggestive of spiritual lessons, and these spiritual lessons must constitute the main purpose of the book, rather than any historical or scientific narration. The story of Adam and Eve is followed by that of Cain and Abel, of Enoch, of Noah and the flood, of the dispersion. In the tenth chapter we have a sort of genealogy of the historic nations of the ancient world. The three centers of national life which arose and which ruled all oriental lands, were the Egyptian, the Chaldean, and the Assyrian. Vast spaces of time are passed over of which we know absolutely nothing.

(2.) From Abraham to the Exodus (or Moses). We understand by the Patriarchs,—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. Abraham was a man of faith, the "father of the faithful," as he has been termed, the founder of the Jewish race. The monotheistic belief of the world today is to be traced back to him. His journey from his native and idolatrous land in the East as, at the call of God, "he went forth not knowing whither he went," until he reached the land of Canaan, was a memorable one, and

was fraught with mighty consequences. The story of his life, which is but fragmentary, covers fourteen chapters of the book of Genesis (ch. 12-26). Grand visions of the future were vouchsafed to him, and he was promised that his posterity, as multitudinous as the sands of the sea, should receive the land of Canaan for its inheritance. Such was God's covenant with Abraham on condition that he and his descendants were obedient.

The career of Abraham's son Isaac presents few points of peculiar interest. He seems to have been gentle in disposition, and to have had all his father's reverence of God, with but little of his force and energy of character. Jacob, Isaac's son, was tricky. Cunning and selfishness were characteristic of him through most of his career. His later years showed the transforming effects of the grace of God. One of his twelve sons, Joseph, was sold by his jealous brethren into Egypt. This was probably during the régime of the Hyksos or Shepherd kings. Here he rose to a station next in influence and power to the king, and in the course of time became the means of supporting his father's family with food in a season of sore famine. Later still, at the invitation of Joseph and with the approval of the king, his father and brethren with their families, attendants, and flocks, took up their abode in Egypt, being assigned to the land of Goshen. In the career of Joseph—one of the purest characters of the Bible—the providence of God was remarkably prominent. With his death the book of Genesis closes. The careful reader will observe that in this account of the families of men, it gradually limits itself to the history of those from which the Redeemer was eventually to spring.

2. The period from Israel in Egypt to Israel in Canaan is one of great importance. It includes the sojourn in Egypt, the exodus, the wilderness life, and the conquest and settlement of the long-promised Canaan. The narrative sweeps through a number of Old Testament books. (Ex., Levit., Num., Deut., Josh.) Two or three of them are historical, the others are taken up with matters of legislation, genealogy, and the institution of an elaborate ritualistic service. A long period of silence succeeded the time of Joseph. Little or no information is given of the conditions existing for two or three centuries perhaps. In the book of Exodus the curtain rises upon the Hebrew people, now grown to be a mighty host, in bondage to the Egyptian government, toiling in the brick fields on the banks of the river Nile. The cries of the enslaved Hebrews to heaven for relief had not been disregarded. Moses, providentially trained for his mission, appears as the emancipator of his race. The Hebrews are freed from their oppressive bondage. After forty years in the wilderness and the needed discipline of obedience and trust which it brought them, they take possession of the land of promise. Under Joshua, Moses' successor, the conquest of Canaan is successfully carried out, and the land divided among the various tribes for permanent occupancy. The posterity of Abraham has expanded into a nation, through which God is more and more to disclose himself to the world, and from which a Saviour is at length to come forth to bless mankind.

3. The third period includes the story of the Judges, and the institution of the monarchy until its division into two kingdoms after the death of Solomon. (1.) The age of the Judges is, for the Israelites, one of transition from

a nomadic life in the wilderness to a settled agricultural life in Palestine. During this time, perhaps two hundred years or more, there was no regular central government, although representatives of the tribes came together at times to consider matters of importance to the whole country. Each tribe had a government of its own, with its own rulers and princes. From time to time as emergencies arose, leaders of ability, irrespective of tribal connections, called Judges, succeeded in rallying the people against a common foe—either the unsubdued Canaanites who still remained within their bounds, or hostile tribes who made incursions into their territory from without. The emergencies called out the men. It was an age of heroes, and in the book of Judges, a number of these heroes and their exploits are spoken of at some length. No detailed history of the period is given, but a series of pictures rather, is presented, affording us glimpses into the state of society among the people, especially at the time of great crises. If entire generations are sometimes passed over in silence, it is because they furnish little that is of interest for the history of redemption. Yet rude as the age was, there emerged from it pure and beautiful characters, with a deep and abiding faith in God. Some of the familiar names which are found in it are Deborah, Gideon, Samson, Jephthah, while later, as given in the first book of Samuel, the names of Eli and Samuel are prominent, the latter, indeed, being the last and most notable of the Judges.

(2.) The most important section of the history of the chosen people after being organized into a nation, was that of the monarchy—single and divided. We include the single monarchy in the period now under con-

sideration. The first king selected, after a disposition to have a centralized government became manifest, was Saul. His reign, at first prosperous, was less so during the later years of his life, owing primarily to a deterioration in his own character and spirit. Then David came to the throne, the shepherd boy, the slayer of Goliath, the sweet singer of Israel. His reign was a brilliant one. The tribes were united, the stronghold Jerusalem was taken and made the capital, the government was thoroughly organized, religious worship was established, surrounding nations were conquered, the kingdom was greatly extended. Although David's own character was not above reproach, his spirit was such that he could truly be said to be a man after God's own heart.

Next came Solomon, the third and last king of the united empire, whose peaceful reign may be regarded as the culminating period of Israelitish history. It was a period of internal improvements on an extensive scale, and of commerce and trade with surrounding nations. The temple was built, and its dedication was an occasion of deep interest. But disintegrating influences were at work, as is often the case when external prosperity prevails, to say nothing of decline in Solomon's own character.

4. Shortly after Solomon's death, the kingdom was divided. Henceforth there were two inharmonious, often warring principalities in the promised land, called respectively the northern and southern kingdoms, or the kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of Judah. The date of the disruption has been fixed at about B. C. 937. (1.) The northern kingdom had a succession of nineteen kings, every one of whom, according to the Scripture record,

"did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah." Anarchy was not uncommon, and the evils of worldliness, idolatry, and corruption, abounded. These evils were boldly denounced by the prophets, notably by Elijah, Amos and Isaiah. At length after a history of some two hundred years, Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom, fell before Sargon II., and Israel came under the power of Assyria. This occurred 722 B. C. (2.) Judah, the southern kingdom, with Jerusalem for its capital, continued to maintain itself about 135 years longer. The government was administered by a single line of kings, that of David, through which his Greater Son was to come in the fulness of time. Unlike the northern kings, some of the southern rulers "did that which was right in the sight of Jehovah." The kingdom fell in the year B. C. 586 or 587. It was overcome by the Chaldean power under Nebuchadrezzar in the capture of Jerusalem after a long and terrible siege and much suffering.

During all this time the prophets were active, raising a warning cry against prevailing evils, but seemingly to little purpose. Especially did they denounce idolatry and declare the certain judgments of God upon the people if they did not desist from it. They also pointed to a Messianic age in the future, when an enduring spiritual kingdom would be established, whose head should be of David's line. Prophetic teaching, indeed, reaches its highest point during this period, and Messianic prediction culminates in Isaiah.

The history of the monarchy, single and divided, is more detailed than that of any other, and is covered mainly by the two books of Samuel, and First and Second Kings. The two books of Chronicles, whenever written, are a col-

lateral history, going to some extent over the same ground. Some suppose that the books of Kings were written by the prophets, designed to give prominence to the northern kingdom, and that the Chronicles were written by priests, from a more ecclesiastical point of view, and relating prominently to the southern kingdom. Most of the other literature of the Old Testament belongs or relates to this double period of the monarchy,—the Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, to the time of the single monarchy; and Amos, Joel, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Isaiah (first part of it), Jeremiah, Habakkuk, to that of the divided kingdom.

5. The time from the exile of leading members of the southern kingdom, or kingdom of Judah, to the regions of Babylon, to the advent of Christ, is included in the fifth period of our division of Bible history. It embraces the exile or captivity, the return, the closing up of the Old Testament history proper, together with the interval between the Old Testament and the New.

(1.) We must distinguish between the captivity of Israel, after the fall of Samaria, B. C. *722*, when many of the people were deported to the region south of the Caspian Sea, after which we hear no more of them—and the captivity of Judah by the Chaldeans about 135 years later, when the people were taken to the vicinity of Babylon and settled on the banks of the Chebar. There had really been two or three deportations in the latter case, within a few years of each other, the main one occurring after the fall of Jerusalem. (2.) But there had been a promise of restoration after seventy years, and at the close of that time (reckoning from the first deportation)

there was a movement looking to a return under the leadership of Zerubbabel. (B. C. 537.) Cyrus, who had recently come to the throne, had given his permission, had even encouraged the Jews to avail themselves of the opportunity afforded of returning to Jerusalem. Accordingly a large number of them, many thousands it is stated, made the long and tedious journey of seven hundred miles to the westward and settled in Jerusalem and its vicinity. After an interval of twenty years, under the inspiration of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, they had rebuilt the temple. About eighty years after the first return to Jerusalem, a second company of exiles, led by Ezra, (B. C. 458) reached the holy city. Ezra's work there was chiefly to restore the institutions of Moses. The next Jewish leader was Nehemiah, who went up from Susa, or Shushan, the Persian capital, about the year B. C. 445. In the midst of much opposition from jealous outsiders, he rebuilt the walls and set up the gates of Jerusalem. The completion of the walls was becomingly celebrated. Under Nehemiah's energetic administration, with Ezra's aid, many needed reforms were instituted. Nehemiah was governor of the colony for many years.

(3.) From this time forward to the time of Christ, we hear little of the Jews. The date of the occurrences recorded in Esther and Daniel is not altogether certain. Save for a short period of independence under the Maccabean princes, Judea was a province under the control of the Persians, the Greeks, and the Romans, in succession, and it is under the Romans that we find it at the opening of the New Testament period. The Roman domination began B. C. 63.

The books relating to this period are Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Daniel, Ezekiel, Haggai, Zechariah, Isaiah (second part of), and Malachi.

6. The New Testament period, according to our division of time, includes the first century of the Christian era. (1.) There had been a remarkable providential preparation for the event so long fore-shadowed in the Old Testament,—the appearance of Christ,—whose birth in Bethlehem of Judea was announced by the angelic choir to shepherds who were watching their flocks by night on the little plain to the eastward. Wise men from the east, having received intimations of the coming event, came and paid homage to the infant Redeemer. He grew up, in Nazareth, subject to his parents, increasing in favor with God and men. He was recognized at length as the long expected Messiah by John the Baptist, his forerunner, and was baptized by him in the Jordan. After a season of retirement in the wilderness, overcoming the temptations which were there set before him, he entered upon his public ministry in the power of the Spirit. In the four gospels we have an account of his wonderful life, his holy character, his mighty works, and his teachings; of multitudes following him, the choice and training of the twelve disciples, the growing opposition of the Jews; finally of his arrest, trial, crucifixion, his burial and resurrection, his commission to the disciples, and his ascension.

(2.) In the book of Acts we have an account of the work of the apostles after Christ's ascension, the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, the two lines of apostolic history,—one in which Peter is the central figure, in the other, Paul. The constant theme of apostolic preaching

was Jesus Christ and his resurrection, and remission of sins through faith in Him. So the work went forward, extending and expanding, believers multiplying, obstacles being overcome, until by the end of the first century the gospel was established in all the leading centers of population and influence in the Roman Empire. "So mightily grew the word of the Lord and prevailed." It was during this apostolic period, before the close of the first century, that the New Testament books were written. Paul wrote most of the epistles, which were addressed to churches or individuals, at intervals, as occasion demanded.

We have thus cursorily surveyed the history contained in the Bible from its beginning with creation, to its completion in the incarnation and work of Christ. We have sought by dividing it into a few great periods, to make the salient points in this history prominent, and although several thousand years are included in our survey, the story of these years in its main features and its great periods is neither difficult to grasp nor to remember. It is a story of the revelation of God, a history of redemption. The light, dim at first, becomes clear in the Sun of Righteousness.

We are now prepared to consider and to study a single period by itself. We select the second, which includes that portion of the history of the chosen people which has to do with the organizing or making of the Hebrew nation, or from Israel in Egypt to Israel in Canaan. The books which relate to this period are Exodus, Numbers, Joshua,—also Leviticus and Deuteronomy as containing the Mosaic legislation.

## II. Making A Nation.

The narrative itself of this period, as we gather its separate parts together into a connected whole, is not difficult to master. For convenience it may be subdivided into a number of sections, each of which can profitably be studied by itself, as follows:

1. The Exodus from Egypt (Ex. 1-18).
2. Giving the law at Sinai (Ex. 19-20).
3. Turned back at Kadesh Barnea (Num. 10-14).
4. Nomadic Life in the Wilderness (Num. 15-19).
5. On the Banks of the Jordan (Num. 20-26).
6. Conquest and Settlement of Canaan (Joshua).

### 1. The Exodus from Egypt.

During the generations succeeding the settlement in Egypt by Jacob and his sons with their families and attendants, they became a great multitude. For this reason, after the king arose "who knew not Joseph," or after the expulsion, probably, of the Hyksos kings, they were looked upon by the authorities of the country as a menace to its safety. What would hinder these Hebrews, slaves though they were, if so disposed, from joining with enemies of Egypt in seeking to overthrow the reigning dynasty? Hence the policy of the government was to cripple and to crush the Hebrews by every means in its power, especially by hard and exhaustive toil. This policy caused suffering and distress beyond description to the defenceless people. So unendurable did this oppression become that they could only cry to heaven for relief, and this

they continued to do for many years without intermission. Nor was God unmindful of the bitterness of their anguish. Although he seemed not at once to respond to their supplications, even while they called upon him he was raising up for them a deliverer, one who, providentially trained for his great responsibility, would in due time free the people from their bondage.

When the providential preparation of Moses to be the emancipator of his race was completed, he enters upon his work. As the adopted son of a princess, he had been trained "in all the wisdom of the Egyptians." At forty years of age he determined to cast in his lot with his suffering countrymen, but through a premature attempt to assume the leadership in a revolt against the authorities, he was forced, in order to escape the wrath of the king, to flee into the wilderness. Here for forty years he was subjected to a still further preparatory discipline. Although this discipline was of an entirely different character from that which he had already received, it was indispensable to success. It was the discipline of seclusion, of meditation, of personal communion with God. (Exodus, ch. 2.) At length, with faith enlarged, with spirit mellowed and humbled, and with perfect knowledge of the wilderness region, he received a divine call to the exalted mission of leading an enslaved race out of its house of bondage. God himself appeared to him in the burning bush. The rashness of his earlier years having given place to a deep humility and self-distrust, Moses was now exceedingly reluctant to attempt the herculean task set before him. Only after the most clear and positive assurance of the divine co-operation, could he be

persuaded to enter upon it. The time was ripe, the work was ready, and the man for the hour was at hand. (Ex. 3 and 4.)

The story of the release of the Hebrews from their thraldom is familiar; how Moses, with Aaron his brother, whom God had appointed his assistant, went before Pharaoh with repeated requests in their behalf; how in consequence of the monarch's persistent refusal of their plea the ten plagues followed, bringing distress upon the whole land; how, after the final and severest plague of all, the death of the first born of the Egyptians, a reluctant consent was given to let the Hebrews go; how, after instituting the Passover feast, they started forth; how the king, altering his mind, set out with an army to compel them to return; how the Israelites, moving forward under divine direction, made a passage of an arm of the Red Sea in safety, the waters opening before them as they advanced; how the Egyptians, attempting to follow, were overwhelmed by the returning waters and destroyed. (Ex. ch. 5-14.)

By this passage of the sea, the Hebrews are free, free from their distressing bondage, free from their ruthless oppressors. They are filled with rejoicing. They recognize the hand of God in their deliverance. He had redeemed them with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. In recognition of the event, Moses gave expression to the common feeling in one of the great poems of the Old Testament, which he caused to be sung by all the people. In it the story of God's wonderful dealings with his people is reviewed, and his praises are rehearsed. The song made a profound impression at the time, and for centuries after the thought and spirit of this magnificent

ode continued to reappear in psalm and prophecy. (Ex. ch. 15.)

But while the Hebrews were free, as yet they were but an undisciplined multitude of serfs. They were not prepared for self government, nor were they fitted at once to take possession of the land—which had long been promised as their future inheritance—to say nothing of wresting it from the Canaanites. Least of all were they prepared for their high mission of giving to the world the knowledge of the one true God, and of being a channel of blessing to succeeding generations. Before they could enter upon this glorious mission, they needed the discipline which a season of dependence upon God in the wilderness would impart to them. Hence instead of being led at once in the direction of the land of promise, whose borders, strongly fortified, were only a comparatively short distance away to the northeast, their course was directed toward the southeast, the region of Mount Sinai, the very heart of the wilderness. Here, in solitude and security, amid the most impressive surroundings, they could be alone with the Most High, and receive needed communications from him. Here also they could take the necessary steps toward organizing themselves into a nation, formulate laws for daily conduct, and elaborate a system of religious worship. The exodus had been a movement of faith from the beginning, a mightier faith than is sometimes recognized. On Moses' part it was a profound conviction that the promises of God, though given centuries before, that the land of Canaan should be the future inheritance of the chosen people, would be fulfilled; that the time had come for that fulfilment; that he himself had been commissioned by God to lead the peo-

ple into the promised land, and that to do this he had received the promise of divine assistance.

### 2. GIVING THE LAW AT SINAI.

The distance to the Sinaitic mountains from the first encampment of the Israelites after crossing the sea, including the windings of the way, is only about one hundred and fifty miles. But the progress of a large body, men, women, and children, with flocks and herds, was necessarily slow. Not until the third month after starting did it reach the little plain at the foot of what was then and has long since been regarded as the sacred mount. Meanwhile the people pass through various vicissitudes, during which their need of discipline, of patience, and of the cultivation of a spirit of trust in the living God, becomes increasingly apparent. They are like children, impulsive, short-sighted, now rejoicing, now cast down, elated one moment over their deliverance, the next full of unreasonable murmuring and complaint against their faithful leader, even longing, at times, rather than to risk the threatened perils of the wilderness, to return to the servitude from which they had escaped. Trying as such a spirit and such conduct on their part must have been, Moses bore with them patiently, strengthened in his course by the direct answers to his prayers which he received from the Most High.

The route which was followed may have been the one still used by caravans between Cairo, or Suez, and Mount Sinai. Everything along its course was barren, dreary. There were desert plains to cross, and narrow defiles through which they were obliged to pass. One

day they encamped by the Red Sea, again in the fastness farther inland. At one time they were oppressed with thirst; no water was to be had for man or beast. At another time their food supply failed them, and they were threatened with all the horrors of famine. But Moses interceded with God, as he always did when in trouble, and relief was vouchsafed.

Thus they journeyed, pitching their camp at one point and another, now in a region of plenty, now in the midst of unequaled desolation. At Rephidim a new experience awaited them. The Amalekites, war-like, well-armed,—at this time the chief tribe of the Sinaitic peninsula,—determined to resist the advance of these Hebrew intruders. Moses, selecting Joshua to command, sent a body of picked men to meet them. This is the first time in the narrative that we meet with the name of the successor of Moses. After a fiercely disputed contest, the Amalekites were disastrously defeated.

Another incident of the journey to Sinai, which probably occurred near its close, was the visit of Jethro, the Midianite, the father-in-law of Moses, to the camp. The visit was important for the wise counsels which Jethro gave to his son-in-law in regard to a division of his official responsibilities. (Ex. 18.)

At length the Israelites are at the foot of Sinai—a group of mountains, bold, lofty, and bare in appearance. (Ex. 19: 1, 2.) This group is nearly at the center of the peninsula—itself a high table land—which lies between the two northern arms of the Red Sea. The place fixed upon for the encampment of the Israelites is described as "before the mount." The identification of this mount or peak among the various peaks of the group is an in-

teresting problem, since it was on this particular peak that the law was given. Since the whole region has been thoroughly explored by travelers competent to form an intelligent judgment, the consensus of opinion seems to fix upon the granite rock known as Ras Sufsafeh as the one referred to in the Scripture narrative. Separated by deep ravines from the rest of the mountain range, this rock or peak rises like a huge altar in lonely grandeur against the sky to a height of 1,500 feet above the general level of the country about. It is visible from every part of the plain or valley, now called Er Rahah, which lies at its base, and which,—two miles long by half a mile in width,—is large enough to afford ample space for the tents of the mighty host which encamped there. This, in fact, is the only level ground in the whole district which could accommodate such a multitude. The rugged hills or mountains of bare granite which enclose the plain are described as having for the most part sloping sides and as forming a sort of natural amphitheater. All the surroundings seem perfectly to harmonize with the Scripture narrative. No fitter theater, certainly, could have been chosen for the great events which were soon to take place. The Sinaitic range is three miles in length, and extends from the northeast to the southwest. The plain is on its north or rather northwest side. It is not impossible that Moses, anticipating his future course, may, before returning to Egypt, have selected this place for the Israelitish encampment.

The relations of the Hebrew people to God were peculiar. They had descended from one who had received the promise that the land of Canaan should be the inheritance of his posterity. As obedience to the com-

mandments of God had been the condition upon which divine favors were granted to Abraham, so must it continue to be with the nation of which he was the head. If his descendants were to be guided and preserved by divine providence, they must obey the divine laws. Hence the necessity that these laws be made known so plainly as to furnish a permanent standard and rule of conduct both at that time and in the ages succeeding. Two covenants had been made between God and man before this, one with Noah, another with Abraham. Now a third was to be established with the descendants of Abraham. The details of its institution are given in Exodus 19. From that time forth, the Israelites, with all their shortcomings, became a peculiar people, as dear to God "as the apple of his eye."

The moral law,—the Ten Words or Ten Commandments, whose two tables constitute the fundamental laws of human society and of the Kingdom of God,—was proclaimed in circumstances calculated profoundly to impress the people with the majesty and authority and power of the Most High. (Ex. 20.) Three days of preparation were required. On the morning of the third day, the peaks of Sinai were veiled in thick clouds. Through these clouds the lightnings quivered; the mountain seemed to be aflame. Terrible thunders, too, whose echoes resounded from crag to crag, rent the air. It was like the sound of mighty trumpets heralding the approach of the Almighty. The people were greatly awed by the spectacle. In the midst of all this the Ten Commandments were given, prefaced with these significant words: "I am the Lord thy God which brought thee

out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." The separate commands follow. God's supremacy and spirituality are emphasized; no other gods, so called, are to be worshiped before Him: no likeness of him is to be made; there is to be no profanation of his name; the Sabbath day is to be remembered to keep it holy. These commands form the first table of the law. They refer to man's relation to God. The second table, relating to the duties of men to each other, follows. The veneration due to parents is declared; stealing is prohibited; so are murder, impurity, the bearing of false witness, and the sin of covetousness. These are universal laws, adapted to all mankind, and of perpetual obligation. They are essential to the very existence of human society.

These words, it is affirmed in the sacred story, were uttered directly by the voice of God. (Ex. 20: 1.) No such voice had ever before been heard. No such scene as that connected with the giving of the law had been witnessed since the world began. How could Israel ever forget what had been seen and heard?

Strange indeed it was, that these impressions should so soon fade away, least of all that the very first of these commands should so soon be forgotten. Yet it was only a little while after this, when Moses was communing with Jehovah in the mount, where he had tarried somewhat longer than usual, that the people erected a golden calf and began to worship it. This idolatrous disposition of the people was sternly rebuked by their indignant leader on his reappearance in the camp. ( Ex. 32.) They were only children in moral things as yet, and it was only by line upon line, precept upon precept, judgment upon judgment, that they became humbled and subdued,

and began to exercise any real trust in the invisible Jehovah.

With the details of the occurrences of that year of encampment at Sinai—embracing the Mosaic legislation, civil and religious, we are not at present concerned. But the moral law is as vital for us as for those who heard it when it was first proclaimed. The giving of this law stands out as the central event of the year's sojourn at Sinai. Yet this law, then first formally announced, important and influential as it was for Israel and has been for the whole world, was not complete. The fact that it was negative and prohibitory in form, would indicate this. The people, children as they were, could appreciate nothing more. Hence the positive statement of the law was reserved for a later age, for the "fullness of time" when Christ should appear, and in Himself, in His life, teachings, and death, give to men a revelation of God and His law which had been but partial and incomplete before.

The positive side of the moral law,—that all-inclusive statement of it for which the world had long waited and which was set forth by Christ,—has sometimes been termed the eleventh commandment, or the law of love. Love is the fulfilling, or the filling out, of the law. Its two tables, covering man's obligation to God and his duty to his fellow men, are summed up in love. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," is the first great commandment, Christ says, and then he adds immediately a second, like unto it, of equal importance and authority: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." (Matt. 22: 37-40.) Both tables of the law are thus included in and fulfilled by love. With a heart full of

love toward God and one's fellow men, one will *want* to keep the law, the whole law. This will be his desire, the motive of his life. To love perfectly, is to keep the law perfectly, but it is only through the grace of Christ, only when his love constrains and inspires, that one can do this. To keep the whole law—and nothing less than this will answer its requirements—both its tables, the first as truly as the second, must be recognized and obeyed. With the love of Christ in the heart they will be obeyed in spirit, which is the vital thing, and literally, also, in the outward act.

The Millennium for which the world is hoping will dawn when men everywhere are filled with the love of God; when the moral law as given at Sinai, which has never been abrogated and never will be, is written on their hearts; when in all the relations in life, including obligation to God as well as to fellow men, love is the all-controlling motive of human conduct. Then will the prayer be answered: "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." All this is possible in Jesus Christ, and in him alone.

### 3. TURNED BACK AT KADESH.

The year which the Israelites spent at Sinai was to them one of great events. It was a year, among other things, of organization, really the birth year of the nation, and a year of preparation for entering into and taking possession of the long promised land of Canaan. When the people again take up their journey, it is in the direction of Kadesh Barnea, whose exact location is uncertain. There are, however, reasons for believing that

it was situated about fifty or sixty miles south of Hebron, and midway between the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean. Its distance in a straight line from the place of the encampment at Sinai is less than 200 miles. Owing to the configuration of the country, the journey would be longer than that. With so little data given as to the route which was actually chosen, only the most general and probable suggestions can be made. Its general direction must have been northward. In the narrative the names of several stopping places are indicated.

The final arrangements for breaking camp were completed in the second month of the second year of the departure from Egypt. We can picture the scene. The people have been numbered. The several tribes, which are designated by different banners, have been assigned to their positions. The Levites, who constitute the tabernacle guard—taking charge of everything connected with its furniture and vessels, and striking or raising the sacred tent as the order comes—occupy the center of the column. In the open wilderness the encampment is in the form of a parallelogram, with the tabernacle in the center. The movement of the mysterious cloud which rests on the tabernacle is the signal for striking or pitching the camp. (Num. 10:11 and ff.)

The journey must have been a trying one, and progress very slow. The route lay through desert wastes, through narrow gorges, and wound around among the wild tangle of mountains of that part of the country. Few incidents of the journey are recorded, and yet enough to show that the old spirit of discontent and of murmuring was far from being extinct. Pausing from time to time for rest, they journeyed toward the fertile region of

Kadesh, beautiful with grass, flowers, shrubs, and abounding waters. Here Moses set up what he supposed to be temporary headquarters, but which proved to be a rallying point for the people for the larger part of their wilderness life.

As preliminary to the proposed invasion, Moses sent out twelve spies to go up and down the land, and, returning, to report what sort of a country it was, what were its climate, its fertility, the number and character of its inhabitants, the strength of their fortifications. (Num. 13.) The favorable report which he anticipated could hardly fail, he thought, to awaken the enthusiasm of the people. The spies were absent about six weeks and evidently did their duty well. They went through the entire length of the land, even to the foot of Hermon at the north. Unfortunately they were not unanimous in their report. They agreed as to the facts, the fertility and desirableness of the country, also as to the difficulties of taking possession of it, but they disagreed in the recommendations based upon these facts. Ten of the spies, the large majority, gave it as their judgment that the project was impracticable,—unwise, not only, but foolhardy. The Israelites would certainly be overwhelmed. They could never take the cities, and in the open field they would be overpowered. The report seemed to make little of the resources of the people; of God's promises to give them the land; of the marvelous results he had already wrought for them in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and all along their course. Nor did it make anything of the exhaustlessness of the divine resources. Difficulties and dangers only were recognized. As the report was made by men whose faith was weak and whose minds

were filled with thoughts of obstacles unduly magnified, it is not strange that those who heard it were paralyzed with fear.

Then Caleb and Joshua made a minority report. By it, they hoped to turn the tide of the prevailing feeling of despair which the other report had evoked. The hardships and the dangers of the proposed campaign against the Canaanites were fully recognized and admitted,—the strong cities, the giants, all the hindrances in the way. But Caleb and Joshua were men of faith and of the courage which springs from faith. Not merely by sight did they walk. "They saw, as it were, over the towers of the walled cities, and over and around the mighty sons of Anak, the mightier hosts of the Lord, and that vast concourse of invisible helpers which had attended Israel along the whole of its weary pilgrimage." So strong indeed was their faith, so confident were they in the abundance of Jehovah's resources for needed aid, and in his disposition to assist them in any emergencies which might arise, that they spoke of the promised land as already theirs. "Let us go up at once and possess it," says Caleb, speaking for himself and Joshua, "for we are well able to overcome it." Their enemies would fall before them. They had only to go up and take what belonged to them. More than this, they had discerned, what the authors of the majority report had evidently failed to perceive, or of which they had made nothing if they did perceive it, viz.: that the Canaanites were already filled with apprehension and fear. The mighty deliverances of Israel's God in the past were not unknown to them, and their spirit was weak in consequence. All the more evident was it, therefore, that what the Israelites needed to do was to go forward in

the path in which God was manifestly leading them, courageously, hopefully, trustfully, and they would be gloriously victorious. They were certain of it. Such, in substance, was the report of Caleb and Joshua.

It was a crisis in Israelitish history. The opportunity for which the people, or their leaders, had been longing, and to which they had been looking forward, was before them. Will they rise to this opportunity? Will they take counsel of their hopes or of their fears, of their faith or their unbelief? Alas, that when upon the verge of what might have been a glorious success, they should so miserably fail, should be so short-sighted, so easily influenced against their highest interests, that the heart of their great leader should be doomed to another disappointment! After hearing the report of the ten, the people lost all heart, were filled with fear, and refused to go forward. (Num. 14.) Not even the courageous words of Caleb and Joshua and their strong appeal had any effect whatever upon them. In their demoralized condition they could not listen to reason, and the only return for their brave counsels which the two faithful spies received, was a cry from the assembly to stone them. In the panic which prevailed, it was even proposed to elect another leader in the place of Moses and march back to Egypt. It was better far to endure the hardships of a life of servitude, than to be destroyed in an impossible attempt to gain possession of Canaan.

Nothing remained, therefore, for the leaders to do, but to turn the faces of the people toward the wilderness, and to wait until their faith and courage should in some degree be adequate to the task in hand. Back to the desert therefore they went, and for nearly forty years

their history is almost a blank. Until a more vital faith should prevail among them and hardier elements of character than they then possessed, they could not hope to wrest their long-promised inheritance from the Canaanitish tribes.

### 4. NOMADIC LIFE IN THE WILDERNESS.

We know very little of the history of the Israelites during their wilderness sojourn. Few particulars have been preserved,—only episodes which occurred from time to time. Probably but little of real consequence took place. Life must have been monotonous and wearisome in the extreme. The region embraced by the wanderings has been supposed to be the eastern portion of the peninsula, in the vicinity or to the southward of Kadesh. The Israelites are often thought of as being constantly on the move, marching every day, camping every night, drifting aimlessly about during all the years of their wilderness life. Such at least is the impression given as the story is usually taught to children, an impression which is quite likely to linger in their minds for many years. The truth of the matter doubtless is that the several tribes were spread out over an area of territory miles in extent, where pasturage could be found for their flocks and herds. Very likely the tabernacle was set up at some central point. From time to time, as there was a general movement of the whole body, it would be moved also. Seventeen stations are mentioned in the narrative where for a season the ark rested. The locations of these stations are now almost entirely conjectural. The life of the Israelites was essentially nomadic. In some places

they may have sown and harvested grain, may even have repeated this for a number of seasons in succession, just as many Arab tribes still do in certain sections of the East. As to the details of their life during this period, much must be left to the imagination.

Sometimes disputes arose among them, and these disputes had to be settled. Sometimes there were violations of the law which had been given for their guidance, and these violations had to be punished. Sometimes new laws were enacted to meet new emergencies. Sometimes, no doubt, they had a taste of war with the desert tribes about them, who would hardly regard with complacency the apparent settling down of an alien race upon territory over which they had long been accustomed to roam unhindered. Once there was an outbreak of rebellion and a summary punishment was dealt to its leader.

For more than a generation the Israelites continued to dwell in tents, engaged in pastoral pursuits, moving about more or less by easy stages as occasion required. Now they abode for a season near the sea, probably the Gulf of Akabah, the eastern arm of the Red Sea, at the head of which, afterward, in the time of Solomon, there was a flourishing seaport; again they encamped in the interior where pasturage would be more abundant. Through all, the disciplinary process went forward. By their isolation, their experiences of trial, the frequent judgments of God for their disobedience, their continued lessons of dependence, they had at length grown to be a comparatively strong and vigorous people. A national spirit had been fostered. Their religious training especially, had been a prominent feature of their discipline.

The ordinances of public worship, formerly but few

and simple, were now numerous and elaborate, and the family of Aaron was set apart for permanent priestly service. The tendency to idolatry, which, in the earlier part of their emancipated life, had been so marked, was effectually checked. Deep impressions had been produced by many of the experiences through which they had passed, so that the spirit of the present generation, while still defective in many respects, was far in advance of that which had been exhibited at the time of the exodus from Egypt.

### 5. ON THE BANKS OF THE JORDAN.

Once more the people are at Kadesh, whence they had been turned back to the desert thirty-eight years previously. They are preparing for a final advance upon the promised land. The attempt this time is not to be made upon its southern border. The plan rather is to strike the country from the east, the more vulnerable side, and from which attack was less expected. First of all permission is sought from the king of Edom to pass peacefully through his dominions around the southern borders of the Dead Sea, to a proposed rendezvous on the east of the Jordan. Permission being refused, the Israelites were thereupon compelled, rather than to fight—which they had no desire to do—to make a long and difficult detour to the southward. (Num. 20: 14-21.) Coming to Mount Hor, a majestic height, the high priest Aaron, the brother of Moses and his close associate during all their desert pilgrimage, passed away. (Num. 20: 22-29.) Miriam, Moses' sister, had died some time before. (Num. 20: 1.)

After thirty days of mourning, the camp again moved forward. The way was difficult and trying. It was in this part of the route that they were bitten by fiery serpents, and it was by Moses' direction that the brazen serpent was set up, by looking at which in faith, the bitten ones were healed. ( Num. 21 : 4-9.) Crossing the brook Zered, (see map) they left Edom and the desert behind them. Ere long they reached the chasm of the Arnon, which flows into the Dead Sea from the east. From this point on they were to encounter opposition. Permission was sought of the various hostile tribes, one after another, through whose territories they must needs pass, only to be refused. An entrance to Palestine could now, therefore, be gained only by war, which Moses would gladly have avoided. Everywhere the results of the conflicts were in favor of the Israelites. The whole country between the Arnon and the Jabbok was brought under their sway. The war spirit being now fairly aroused, an expedition was sent against Og, king of Bashan, still farther to the north, and his land too, whose oaks and vast herds were its boast, with its fortified cities, and its warlike population, passed into the hands of the Israelitish hosts. Og and his army were utterly defeated. It was a remarkable achievement, since Bashan, unlike its petty neighbors, was a kingdom of prodigious resources and of great valor. (Num. 21 : 10-33.)

Later still the Midianites and the Moabites, now to the south of them, entered into a league against them. It was in this connection that the incident of Balaam and his speaking ass occurred. But this league was unsuccessful. The forces of Israel continued to be victorious

over all opposition, and the entire trans-Jordanic region was brought under their sway. The plain immediately to the east of the Jordan, above its entrance to the Dead Sea, now became their headquarters. Here, in full view of the land which was soon to be theirs, they remained for a considerable period, and deliberately made preparations for the invasion. (Num. 22 and ff.)

It was while the Israelites were encamped here that the incidents recorded in the book of Deuteronomy took place. Moses realized that his work was about done, his mission with the chosen people ended. He received the command of God to give his last charge to the people, to arrange for his successor, and to ascend to the mountain whence he was to view the land of promise, and which was to be his last earthly resting place. First of all he assembled the leaders and sought, in the strongest possible way, to impress upon them the necessity, if they would enjoy the blessing of God in the days to come, and avert the terrible punishment which would follow disobedience, to cleave closely to Jehovah and faithfully to obey the law and the ordinances which had been communicated to them for their observance. This he did by a series of addresses which seem to have been given at intervals, and which are recorded in the first thirty chapters of Deuteronomy.

Moses' next care was with respect to his successor. The man for the hour it was not difficult to find. Joshua, whose name, whenever referred to in the narrative, is always associated with integrity, force of character, and faith, was manifestly the man upon whom the mantle of Moses should fall. Already indeed he had been desig-

nated, not obscurely, for the position. Both he and the people are exhorted to go over the Jordan, nothing daunted, and possess the land. (Deut. 31: 1-8.)

Moses now prepares to obey the summons to go up unto Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which was near the encampment, to behold the land of Canaan, and there to be gathered to his fathers. Quietly and unostentatiously he withdrew from the camp, and took his way alone to the designated height. Who may attempt to describe his emotions as he left the people, whom in spite of their frequent waywardness, he loved as a father; or as, from Mount "Pisgah's lofty height," he gazed over the land upon which he might look but was not permitted to enter? At his feet were the tents of the multitude, the plain, and the river Jordan. A few miles westward, beyond the river, was the stronghold Jericho. To the right his eye took in the land of Gilead, as it was afterward termed, the region which he had wrested from the opposing kings. To the left, to the southwest, were the grassy fields of Beersheba, with the Egyptian desert beyond. Directly in front lay all the land of Judah, the hill country, and the "utmost sea" to the west. Doubtless his view included the majestic Hermon far to the north, and the Lebanon mountains, for the atmosphere of that country is remarkably clear. Mount Carmel, too, and Tabor, must have been plainly seen. It was a magnificent panorama. The record states that as he gazed, these words fell on his ears: "This is the land which I swear unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying I will give it unto thy seed." Then in silence and in solitude he breathed his last, his soul passed within the veil and was at home with God. In the closing words of Deuteronomy, we read

that God buried him, and "no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day." (Deut. 34.) Well has the poet written of his burial:

"By Nebo's lonely mountain,
East of the Jordan's wave,
In a vale in the land of Moab,
There lies a lonely grave.
And no man knows that sepulcher,
And no man saw it e'er,
For the angels of God upturned the sod,
And laid the dead man there."

Moses was a many-sided man, was great as a leader, as a legislator, as a man of faith and prayer; great in the work which he accomplished of emancipating an enslaved race; of leading, disciplining and preparing it for its inheritance of the land Canaan. He himself had been providentially prepared for his mission. All his learning, wisdom, and the qualities of character which had been developed by the trials through which he had passed, were utilized in the exigencies which arose from time to time during his leadership of the people. He was a man of marvelous patience. If on one occasion he spoke "unadvisedly with his lips," no man, it would seem, ever had greater provocation. It is well to remember that with all his exceptional virtues, he was but a man after all. He was able, as a rule, to dwell serenely in an atmosphere of trust. His intercourse with God was of the most confidential character; he never pleaded with him in vain. His faith was the secret of his calm and restful spirit, "for he endured," we read "as seeing him who is invisible." (Heb. 11:27.) This faith gave him courage in danger, calmness and resignation in trial, and patience

in the face of unreasonable complaints from an ungrateful people.

### 6. CONQUEST AND SETTLEMENT OF CANAAN.

It remains now in concluding our sweep through the period of Bible history under consideration—the making of the Israelitish nation—to outline, as briefly as may be, the story of the conquest and settlement, under the leadership of Joshua, of the long-promised land for which the people had been waiting ever since the exodus from Egypt forty years before. The book of Joshua is devoted to this. The first eleven chapters give a graphic description of the different stages of the conquest. The rapid, often forced marches of Joshua in order to surprise the enemy, the fall of cities, the defeat of the armies of confederated kings, are all vividly set forth. In the remaining chapters of the book an account is given of the division of the territory among the victorious tribes, concluding with Joshua's final counsels to the people and his death.

The plan of invasion, which had been settled upon before Moses' death, exhibited consummate generalship. The usual course of invaders had been to attack the country from the south, as the Israelites, forty years earlier, had proposed to do. But on the southern border, where attacks were expected, the country was strongly fortified, and in the face of such defences it would have been exceedingly difficult for an invading army to make successful headway. The present plan was to strike the country at the east, where attack was least expected, where the defences were the weakest, and where the natural barriers were thought to be sufficiently strong to hinder the

progress of an invading army. Then after piercing the center of the enemy's lines and separating the north from the south, his divided forces could be attacked and defeated in detail.

In carrying out this plan and to furnish a secure basis for future operations, the stronghold of Jericho, which was but a few miles to the west of the river, and which commanded the two chief passes into the interior of the country, must first be reduced. As preliminary to this, the Jordan itself must be crossed, and for aught Joshua knew, its passage would be hotly contested. The first four chapters of the book of Joshua describe the preparations for this, the crossing itself, and the establishment of the camp at Gilgal, three or four miles west of the river. The latter continued to be the Israelitish headquarters for a considerable period. While ultimate victory was certain, much time and fighting would be necessary in order to secure it.

So far as can be ascertained from the records, the conquest was accomplished in three campaigns, the first in central Palestine, the second in the southern part of the country, and the last in the north.

1. The campaign in central Palestine, although more fully described than the others, was evidently a brief one. Very likely the resistance here was less stubborn than in other sections of the land. The fifth and sixth chapters of the book give account of certain preliminary religious rites preparatory to entering upon the campaign, of the theophany which was evidently designed to impress Joshua with a vivid sense of his divine mission and of his personal relation to the Being who had appointed him to it, and of the reduction itself of the stronghold

Jericho. It was certainly a very unique and unusual method which was employed to accomplish the latter. No weapons of war were used. The fighting men of Israel, accompanied by priests with rams' horns surrounding the sacred ark, simply marched around the city walls seven days in succession. On the last day the city was encompassed seven times, and every ram's horn in the army was called into use. Then at the command of Joshua a mighty shout was raised, and suddenly the walls of the city fell flat. The city was laid waste and all its wealth came into the possession of the Israelites. The fall of this stronghold not only strengthened mightily the confidence of the Hebrews, but it added to the panic which had already begun to prevail all over Canaan.

Next we are told of the defeat of a detachment of the Israelitish forces at Ai, which was located ten or twelve miles to the northwest of Jericho, and reached by one of the mountain passes which Jericho had commanded; of the dismay which this reverse occasioned to Joshua in the fear that for some reason the Lord's favor had been withdrawn; of the discovery of the cause of the disaster in the appropriation by Achan, contrary to explicit directions, of some of the valuable booty of Jericho to his personal and private use; of the discovery of the guilty one, his punishment, and of the complete victory of the Israelites in the second attack on Ai. Then, following the directions of Moses, the Israelites went to Shechem in the heart of the country to renew their covenant vows and to hear the conditions on which they were henceforth to hold the land. This renewal of the covenant took place in the memorable valley between mounts Ebal and Gerizim, where Abraham had rested on his journey

from Chaldea and erected his first altar to Jehovah, and where Jacob had settled on his return from the same country, digging a well near by which remains to this day. It was a most impressive occasion as the descendants of these patriarchs renew their allegiance to Jehovah and accept his law as the rule of their lives.

After the victories at Jericho and Ai, the inhabitants of the central portion of the country seem to have made no further opposition to the advance of Joshua. Through a stratagem, the Gibeonites, whose city was located on an eminence six miles north of Jerusalem, succeeded in effecting a treaty with the Israelites—a treaty which included three other cities in their vicinity, and by means of which they were to be spared in the general destruction which was feared. The deception was soon after discovered, but having sworn to preserve their lives, the Israelites could not violate their engagement. (Chapters 7, 8, 9.)

2. After the central portion of the country had been pacified, Joshua entered upon his campaign against the combined kings of southern Palestine. These kings, it seems, regarded the action of the Gibeonites in entering into a treaty with Israel as treachery against the common interests of the country. At the instance of the king of Jerusalem, a powerful stronghold, four other kings combined to make an assault upon Gibeon. At once the Gibeonites sought assistance from Joshua, who promptly responded. By a forced march of a whole night, he surprised the enemy and completely discomfited them. As a military leader, Joshua was famous for rapid movements, which surprised the enemy, threw them into a panic, and rendered victory over them comparatively easy. As he had anticipated, the foe was entirely unprepared for bat-

tle, was utterly routed, and was pursued through the passes of upper and lower Bethhoron. While struggling through the latter, a terrific hail-storm added to their discomfiture and helped to destroy their already diminished ranks. The battle was a memorable one. The fleeing enemy was pursued to the border of the plain and all the five kings were captured and slain.

The long and vigorous campaign which followed, resulted in the conquest of the whole of southern Palestine. City after city fell into the hands of the Israelites. The strongholds of Makeddah, Libnah, Lachish, Eglon, Hebron, and last of all Debir,—most of whose sites have been identified—were stormed and captured in succession. With the mention of Debir, the history of the operations in the south is brought to a close. The entire district, from the center of the country to the extreme southern frontier, was subdued. (Ch. 10.)

3. The history of the campaign in northern Palestine, the final struggle of the conquest, is given with little detail. Like the country at the south, the northern section of the land was governed by a number of independent chiefs who ruled over small tribes of various races which occupied the region from mount Hermon to mount Carmel, and were settled at various points on the plain of Esdraelon. At the head of these chieftains was Hazor, the most powerful of them all. In order to resist the further progress of Joshua, they entered into a league. The camp of the allied forces was pitched near lake Merom. They formed a great host, with many horses and chariots. As soon as Joshua learns of their encampment, he makes one of his characteristically swift marches up the Jordan valley. As usual he finds the enemy unpre-

pared. Without a moment's delay, he dashes upon them and begins his terrible work of slaughter. The forces of the north are utterly demoralized, flee in confusion in all directions, everywhere pursued by the victorious Israelites. Their chariots are burned, the sinews of their horses cut. The victory was decisive, and although the inhabitants of the northern region offered a feeble resistance to the invaders for a long time, this campaign virtually closed the war. Some strongholds in the country, notably that of Jebus or Jerusalem, long remained unconquered and often became centers of revolt against the authority of the chosen people, giving them no little trouble, yet the Israelites were the possessors of the country after all, and so they remained for hundreds of years.

In succeeding chapters of the book of Joshua, or from the twelfth chapter onward, the division of the territory among the various tribes is described. The book concludes with an account of the final counsels and the death of the great warrior. He had been a worthy successor of Moses, and had proved himself to be the man for the conquest, as truly as Moses had been for the exodus and the wandering. Both were providential men.

A story like this suggests many practical spiritual lessons, and there is constant temptation to delay and dwell upon them. But this is not our special purpose at this time. The aim, rather, has been, first of all, to give a bird's eye view of the whole field of Bible history, dividing it for convenience into a few great periods, and then to study one period in particular, and that perhaps the most important, the making of the Israelitish nation, as an illustration of how all the periods may be studied in

succession. In this way it would not be difficult soon to grasp the entire Bible story. The period itself which we have been studying—though to separate the narrative of it from the mass of other matter which is given along with it in the several books which form our authority, is not always easy—is one which is interesting and richly rewarding in itself, and forms a splendid preparation for entering upon the study of the periods succeeding and which naturally grow out of it.

# III

# Study of the Bible By Books.

# FOREWORD.

To be appreciated, the books of the Bible need to be read and studied in their historical settings. They were written at different periods, by different men, were called out by different circumstances, were written for different classes of people or for different individuals, and with different ends in view. A knowledge of such facts as these, or of the circumstances out of which a particular book sprung, would throw a flood of light upon the book itself, often indeed, furnish a key to its otherwise obscure meaning. Then one is prepared to take a grand sweep through the whole of it, studying it by the "telescopic" or comprehensive method. Afterward, the "microscopic" or minute method—dissecting it, analyzing it, taking it up a section, chapter, paragraph, or verse at a time—may be employed to advantage. Many of the old prophetic books, now practically meaningless to the ordinary reader and seldom or never referred to by him, would in this way be made to glow with interest. The epistles, some of which may now seem complicated and involved in their thought and argument, and unattractive, would be found to pulsate with the deeper life of their authors, and to abound in the richest fruitage of their Christian experience. It would be seen, also, how applicable their teachings are to some of the most practical questions which confront the individual Christian and the Christian church today. There is a peculiar advantage in taking one of the Gospels, as Matthew or Mark, for example, or one of the narrative books of the Old Testament, like Joshua, Samuel, Esther, or Ezra and concentrating all attention upon it until the text is thoroughly understood, its leading ideas grasped, and its spirit possessed.

A few book studies of this character are here presented. Among them is one from the Minor Prophets which to most readers form the driest and most obscure section of the Bible. Instead of being dull and uninteresting, however, the book of Amos, in the light of its setting, will be found to be one of the most vivid, vigorous and intelligible of books. Another is the book of Acts,—full of stirring scenes, presenting a picture of the life and activity of the Christian church during the generation succeeding Christ's ascension and its progress in the face of seemingly the most insuperable obstacles. It is one of the most suggestive and inspiring of the New Testament books.

Another still, in brief outline is one of Paul's most practical epistles, his first letter to the Corinthian Christians. The principles here enunciated have by no means become obsolete. Some of them need recognition and application now as much as in the olden time.

With frequent and careful reading of these books, important points being noted and carefuly looked up, following the suggestions given in the early part of the chapter—the results of one's study being afterwards written out in connected form—a surprising and gratifying fruitage will be realized. After some of the simpler books have been studied in this way, others more difficult may be attempted.

After an acquaintance has been gained with the general outline of Bible history, no method of studying the sacred World is so important as the study of it by books.

## STUDY OF THE BIBLE BY BOOKS.

In order to master a book of the Bible, it must necessarily be read again and again. It is said that Dean Stanley used to read a book through three separate times; first for the story, second for the thought, and third for the literary style. One less familiar with the Scriptures, however, than he was, needs to read a book through more frequently than that in order fully to grasp its meaning. Most people imagine that they have not time to do this, especially to read a book through at a sitting. But it requires far less time to go through any book of the Bible than is commonly supposed. Once some Y. M. C. A. men were asked how long they thought it would take to read through the longest book of the Bible. One guessed two days. As a matter of fact, three or four hours would be sufficient. Forty-seven of the books, says Dr. W. F. Crafts, can be read through in less than an hour each, some of them in twenty minutes or less. Seventeen books of the New Testament can be read through in as many minutes each, or in less time than is usually given to the morning paper. When the epistles—which are letters to churches or individuals—were written they were designed to be read through at a sitting, and were. What would we think of reading any other letters in the haphazard, piecemeal fashion in which people usually read these letters of Paul? How much acquaintance would one gain with Paradise Lost, with Shakspeare's plays, with Scott's

novels, or Motley's histories, were he to pursue a similar course with them? Yet if one reads a chapter or two of an epistle or other book of the Bible at a sitting, he flatters himself that he has done his full duty by the Scriptures, and is surely on the way to heaven. But it is impossible adequately to understand any book of the Bible if it is read only in this fragmentary manner. It is only as one reads large portions of the Scriptures at a sitting, as one would read any other book, that one can gain a large view of their contents, any clear conception of the purpose of the writers of the book, or a comprehensive view of the life of Christ, or know the charm, the interest, the engrossing power of the Bible.

An experienced traveler says that on visiting places of interest abroad, his plan was first to climb the highest tower possible in order to gain a comprehensive outlook over the city as a whole, noticing some of the leading landmarks. Next he would take a carriage and be driven through the principal streets, the great arteries of trade, the boulevards and parks, in order to fix still more definitely in mind the leading features of the place. Finally he would examine carefully the points of interest in detail, museums, picture galleries, churches, libraries. In this way thorough knowledge of places visited would be gained in the shortest time.

A similar course might be pursued to advantage in seeking to gain a comprehensive knowledge of the Bible, —first obtain a general view of it as a whole, then master its main divisions, preparatory to the study of each of the books of which it is composed, in detail. Or, the same course might be followed with profit with reference to each book by itself. Read it through rather rapidly the

first time, not stopping to investigate the points which suggest further inquiry, so as to get a bird's-eye view of the whole, some idea of the purpose of the book; then read it over again more carefully, noting its main divisions; then read it a number of times, with a different aim each time, so as to master the details. Most of our well-known Bible instructors who have made suggestions on this subject, agree as to the importance of this continuous reading and re-reading of a book, half a dozen times at least, noticing some particular thing each time. Suppose the book under consideration is some historical or narrative book, like the Acts, or Exodus, or Nehemiah, or Esther. Read the book through rapidly the first time to get an impression of it, or for a general idea of its contents. At another reading observe the principal subjects of which the book treats, or its main points. In this way one will gain a clear outline of its contents. At another reading make a list of all the places referred to, look them up on the map, read about them in a Bible dictionary. Make a list also, of all the persons referred to, and study each one's life and character. Note any historical allusions. In another reading still, notice the references to the manners and customs of the times, the houses, the dress, the family life, the institutions, the political, social, and moral conditions, the form of government. Read again to note all elements peculiar to the book, especially in comparison with similar books of the Bible—words, expressions, turns of thought, incidents. These elements, though not always easy to get at, often furnish the best key to the writer's characteristics and purposes. At another reading, the difficulties, or points not clearly understood, may be gathered together. Finally,

study the doctrines which are taught, the authorship, the time of writing, the literary character of the book. Then make a concise statement of its contents, an analysis of the whole, with main divisions and subdivisions. If one writes out, even roughly, the narrative, with the side-lights which his investigations have thrown upon it, it will add immensely to the value of his study, helping to fix all in the memory, and facilitating a review of its results at any time.

In case of most of the prophetic or didactic books of the Old Testament, or of many of the epistles of the New, some preliminary information may be necessary at the outset in order to an intelligent study of them, such as the historical situation at the time and out of which they were written, and some idea of their aim. But whenever one can, first of all, go directly to the book itself, it is of great advantage to do so. Let the outside helps come in later whenever possible, rather than at the outset.

It is evident at a glance what thorough work one would do in studying any book of the Bible in such a way as the one indicated, or all the books in succession, the method varying in each case as might be necessary to correspond with the nature of the book. One would soon come to know thoroughly the particular book which he had studied, and eventually the entire Bible. A fresh meaning would break forth from it at every reading. While not every one might be able to devote as much time to Bible study as would be required by this method, still it is surprising how much can be accomplished, even with a short time devoted to it daily, or weekly, if only one sets about the work in earnest and perseveres in it. If a circle or club of persons were formed for this pur-

pose, it would add greatly to the interest and profit of such study. Each of the members could contribute something, the others taking notes, while the discussion of the points under review would help to enlarge their conceptions, and aid in fixing in mind the results of their combined study. At any rate, the historical method of Bible study, making a thorough investigation of each book in its historical connections and settings, is one of the most helpful and instructive.

## I. A Book of Biography.

We are now prepared to take up and consider a few illustrative examples—two or three very briefly, and one or two more at length. The general method of study just pointed out will naturally be modified more or less to suit each particular case. Suppose, to begin with, we take some narrative or historical book of the Old Testament, as Genesis, Joshua, first or second Samuel, Esther, Nehemiah. First Samuel will afford a good example. First, read it through at a sitting. It may take forty-five minutes to do so. Naturally the first inquiry will be as to what the book is about. Its subject is Samuel, judge and prophet. Presently it passes on to tell about Saul with whom Samuel was contemporary. After a time David as a young man comes into the narrative, which goes on until Samuel passes away. Saul's death is noted at the end of the book. Thus the book has treated of Samuel, Saul, and David, and as a result of the first reading some idea of the general history of each of them up to the death of Saul and the time when David succeeded him, has been gained.

Upon going to the book the next time, a natural inquiry will be whether it is not possible to divide Samuel's life into distinct portions, so that each may be studied by itself. It will be found that three periods are presented:

First: Samuel's childhood and youth (ch. 1-3).

Second: His active life as a ruler of Israel (ch. 4-9).

Third: His old age, when he anointed Saul as king of Israel (ch. 10), and finally came in contact with the youth David (ch. 16). His death is stated in ch. 25.

These three periods can be taken up in order—each being read and studied until it is mastered, after which the entire narrative should be read through to get the whole sweep of it before the mind.

While these separate portions of Samuel's life are being studied, his character as prophet, as ruler, as a good man, and his relation to the unfolding of the history of the people of Israel, will all the time be growing clearer. Various practical lessons also, for personal benefit, will constantly be suggested.

When Samuel's life has been completed, Saul's life can be taken up. It may be divided into two parts—first the account of his early years; second, his later history. The narrations of these different men overlap somewhat, but portions which are unrelated to the particular topic in hand, can be passed over lightly at the time.

Next there is the history of David—the earlier part of it—and with this the book closes. For the rest of it, if one wishes to continue the study, one must pass into second Samuel, which is devoted to David alone. There the prosperity of his middle life is set forth and also the sore adversities of his later years. His early struggles pre-

pared him for his prosperity, and the sins of his days of prosperity brought on the adversity and bitter sorrow of his declining years. His death was preceded by the anointing of his son Solomon to be his successor. (1 Kings ch. 1 and 2.)

Such a study as this of the first book of Samuel,—or of the second also, if one wishes—will be found interesting, suggestive, instructive—a much wiser method than that of reading one or two chapters each day in succession without stopping to consider the relation of the different parts of the book to each other, which is yet the way in which a great many people read their Bibles.

## II. A Vivid Minor Prophet.

Let us now enter into what many regard as the driest, least interesting, hardest-to-be-understood section of the Bible—that of the Prophets. We will take up Amos, one of the Minor Prophets, perhaps the earliest of them all.

First, as to the historical situation. It is about the year 750 B. C.—Scene, Bethel, near the southern boundary of the northern kingdom. Jeroboam II, a statesman of ability, is on the throne, Samaria his capital. It is an era of great national prosperity. The terrible wars with Syria, Israel's neighbor at the north, which had long drained its resources, had ceased. That power had all it could do to defend itself against the great empire of Assyria now threatening it from the east, and which was disputing with Egypt the supremacy of the world. Israel was now richer than ever before and the wealthier classes lived in great opulence and ease. The kingdom was at

the zenith of its glory. But in connection with this luxury there had also come in wide-spread dishonesty, perverted justice, bribery, and oppression of the poor who were sometimes sold as slaves by remorseless creditors. There was corruption everywhere. Religiously the condition of things was no better. Although festivals were held on a most extravagant scale, these festivals were attended with drunken revelries and shameless debaucheries quite after the manner of the heathen. All the external forms of worship were observed with a great show of devotion. The most elaborate rites and ceremonies were maintained. Yet this worship had degenerated into a mere empty ritualism. Although Jehovah was still recognized as supreme, His worship was very much debased, pagan elements having crept into it, and was utterly lacking in vitality. Sin was not so much the violation of moral law as the neglect of religious rites. Public and private virtue had decayed, purity was at a discount, society was rotten at the core.

Such was the sad condition of things in the social and religious life of the northern kingdom at the time under consideration. What was needed was that some Elijah or John the Baptist or Martin Luther should arise and rouse the people out of their lethargy, utter a mighty protest against prevailing corruption, the emptiness and sham and shamelessness of their religious worship, and fearlessly champion the cause of righteousness and truth. And such a man was about to appear. The time was ripe for his advent.

As to Amos personally, Old Testament history has nothing to tell us. All that we know of him is what may

be gathered from the personal references in the book which bears his name. Yet enough is given to furnish us a definite and interesting conception of his character and career. He was not a citizen of the northern kingdom, although he had evidently become thoroughly familiar with its corrupt life. He came from Tekoa, a little town in Judea, about six miles south of Bethlehem, twelve miles south of Jerusalem, which was located on a commanding hill on the edge of the Judean desert. His occupation was that of a shepherd or herdsman, and also a vine dresser. He was a plain unassuming man, whose surroundings were all humble. Although he was not educated, in the technical sense, he was nevertheless well-informed, and was well acquainted with current movements in the world and in his own land and in Israel. Then, too, he meditated deeply in his seclusion in regard to the things of God. Still, nothing had been farther from his thought than to be a prophet or preacher of righteousness. In that age it was an ungrateful service to undertake. Yet an irresistible conviction came to him that God had called him to this very responsibility with reference, particularly, to the northern kingdom, which, by its persistent wickedness, was rushing on to an abyss of ruin.

Under this divine impulsion, Amos reluctantly set out upon his distasteful errand to the proud, self-complacent people of the neighboring kingdom. On his journey northward—which, however, was only a short one,—he would pass by Bethlehem the city of David, with all its interesting associations; then Jerusalem, with its great temple, the pride of the loyal worshipers of Jehovah; a few miles farther on he would pass the boundary line

of the two kingdoms, and draw near to Bethel. Conspicuous among all the structures of this city was a sanctuary which had been built to rival Solomon's temple at Jerusalem. It must have been an imposing sight which burst upon his view as he approached and entered the city. One of the national religious festivals was in progress at the time. We can imagine how the spirit of Amos must have been stirred within him, as he saw signs on every hand that the people were wholly given to worldliness, to civic and social corruption, to unnamable abominations. It must have required courage of a high order to stand up in the midst of all this outward splendor and pomp and power, and denounce it as hollow, rotten, an offence to God, and to declare his sure judgment upon the people unless they repented. Yet this is what he did, and what he continued to do until he felt that his mission was concluded. He had a message from God to deliver, and whether men would hear or forebear, he continued unflinchingly to declare it.

The book of Amos, as it has come down to us, is probably a summary of several discourses delivered during his sojourn at Bethel. It may be divided into three sections:

| | |
|---|---|
| First | Ch. 1 and 2 |
| Second | Ch. 3 to 6 |
| Third | Ch. 7 to 9 |

The first section (ch. 1 and 2) is exceedingly interesting. It comprises the tactful introduction of the prophet, as he takes his position in the temple court, or possibly in some public place in the streets, and proceeds to address the people. It presents a vivid picture of the moral condition of the surrounding countries. One after another

they are arraigned for their violations of the natural laws of humanity, the particular sin being specified in each case. They have gone contrary to the light of nature, which is common to all nations, heathen as well as civilized, and so are all without excuse. In consequence, the judgments of God are about to fall upon them—(see map) Syria, at the north, Gaza at the southwest, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, Moab—all. Then he turns to Judah, the sister kingdom to Israel, at the south, the prophet's own country, which had been favored above all these nations by special revelations from God. Even Judah, he says, is not to be spared. Judgment would fall upon her as well as the rest, not because of the same low grade of sins—sins of barbarity for which they were condemned,—but because she had violated the higher light which had come through God's disclosures to her from time to time in her history.

After such an introduction as this, which could hardly have failed to evoke popular applause—so gratifying is it always to hear one's enemies denounced,—the prophet suddenly turns upon Israel itself. All the sins which were rife in that land are scathingly denounced. "The only difference," he says, "between you and your barbarian neighbors, is that you have sinned against greater light, hence your sins are all the more heinous. Gross injustice and cruelty on the part of your rulers, are common. Every spark of mercy in your hearts has been quenched by your insatiable greed. The most shameless immorality is openly and everywhere practiced. Worst of all, just as with the Canaanites, lust is gratified under the guise of religion, all this in utter forgetfulness of God's mercy, who brought you out of Egypt, an unor-

ganized body of serfs; who led you safely, for forty years, through the perils of the wilderness; who enabled you to subdue this land of Canaan, possessed though it was, by powerful peoples; who sent prophets to instruct you. And yet, instead of appreciating this constant thoughtfulness and kindness in your behalf, you have ignored God's laws, have resisted his commands, have silenced his prophets. Your cup of transgression is full to overflowing; the time is ripe for judgment; punishment can no longer be withheld, nor shall the strongest or swiftest among you escape the overwhelming destruction which is impending." These are burning words to address to a proud, self-righteous, cultured people, but the prophet does not spare them.

This gives us a pretty fair sample of his style of address, and it will not be necessary to delay to go through the remaining sections of the book in detail. Suffice it to say that in the second section—(ch. 3-6), he lays bare still further the sins of the people, the rich, the nobles, the leaders, the women even, shows how utterly they have come short of their responsibilities. The fact that they, of all nations, stood in a peculiarly intimate relation to Jehovah as his chosen people, would by no means exempt them from punishment. Their zealous worship, their elaborate but hollow ceremonialism, their sacrifices and offerings—all these externals of a lifeless worship, were but as mockery in his eyes. The various calamities which had from time to time overtaken them in their history, had been intended as providential warnings against continuance in their sins, yet all these had been in vain. Nothing remained therefore, but to pronounce Israel's doom. A nation—referring no doubt to the dreaded Assyrian power—would be brought against them, and the

people would be carried into captivity beyond Damascus. Yet this fearful doom need not be. There was still space for repentance, which alone would avert it.

The closing section of the book—covering the last three chapters,—is devoted to a series of visions, which may have been texts of separate discourses, together with an account of an interruption of the prophet by the priest of Bethel, and the book closes with a more hopeful outlook for the future—a picture of the ultimate return from captivity of a loyal remnant of the people which should be preserved. Then Amos, having completed his mission, returned to his home at Tekoa, where it is supposed that he gathered up the substance of his discourses and wrote them out in the form which has come down to us.

Intellectually, Amos ranks next to Isaiah. His style is terse, dramatic, simple, with many vivid metaphors drawn from rural scenes, yet is exceedingly pointed and forcible. If we search mostly in vain for the more tender elements in his preaching—though these are not altogether lacking—it must be remembered that the disease for which he was to prescribe was desperate and that heroic treatment was demanded.

It may here be stated that the doom which Amos declared would come upon the nation, actually befell it not many years later. Its capital fell, after a three years' siege by the Assyrians, in 722 B. C., and its leading inhabitants were deported far to the eastward.

Who shall say, after this,—taking Amos as a sample—that the prophetic books are dry and uninteresting? Studied in the light of their historical settings, some of them are of even a fascinating interest.

## III. The Simplest of the Gospels.

We turn now to the New Testament. First we will dwell briefly upon one of the gospels, and see if it is not possible, without much difficulty, to gain some kind of a definite outline, a bird's eye view, of the life of Christ, concerning which but few Christian people have any very clear conception. We will take the Gospel according to Mark, the oldest, simplest, most graphically written of the four, and which can easily be read through in an hour. It is believed to give us the gospel essentially as Peter presented it,—i. e., that Peter was the chief source of Mark's information. It was written primarily, manifestly, for Gentile readers, as Matthew's gospel was written for Jewish readers.

The writer's aim seems to have been to picture Christ to his readers as He appeared to His contemporaries—in the midst of His activities from day to day—of healing, of teaching, of performing mighty works, breathing a sweet and beautiful spirit through all. He would leave the life thus presented to make its own impression, the description being adapted to lead those who should read it to share the author's conviction as announced in the very first line—that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God.

A simple outline of His life is given—not full of complete,—but sufficiently so to form a basis for more extended study later. It is confined to the most active period of Christ's life, chiefly to the Galilean ministry and the still more crowded passion week. Additional facts are presented in the other Gospels, which, however, omit some of those given in Mark.

In order fully to grasp Mark's Gospel, with its many incidents and details, often disconnected, one needs to read it through carefully several times. Various subdivisions will be found possible, and these can be studied by themselves.

In the early part of the first chapter, we have a brief account of the preaching of John the Baptist, as with clarion tones he calls on men to repent and thus prepare for the coming of the long-expected Messiah, whose advent he declared to be near at hand. Then Jesus himself appears upon the scene, and receives John's baptism. From this time Jesus is the central figure of the book to its close. At once, after His baptism and the temptation in the wilderness succeeding it, he begins His work in Galilee where most of His public life was spent. Nothing is said about His earlier ministry in Judea. Most of the book is devoted to His labors in Galilee (ch. 1 : 14 to ch. 9 inclusive). This section may be sub-divided to advantage, although the divisions are not always very distinct. Christ's teachings and various incidents are constantly intermingled. We have: 1. Christ's ministry alone. 2. Calling of four disciples and his ministry with them. 3. Calling of Levi. 4. The formal calling of the twelve. 5 Sending the disciples forth. 6. The confession of Peter. 7. Departure for Jerusalem.

During this time many miracles are performed; Christ is opposed by scribes and Pharisees; is rejected at Nazareth; goes on preaching tours; is transfigured before some of the disciples.

After His Work in Galilee is completed, Christ sets out on a journey southward through Perea, at the east of the Jordan, ministering as he goes. An account of this is

given in chapter 10. Reaching Jerusalem, the activities of the days preceding His death.—His triumphal entry, His teaching in the temple, His discussions with the Pharisees and Sadducees, his discourse upon the last things,—are indicated in chapters 11-13.

The final scenes of Christ's earthly life are portrayed in chapters 14-15,—the Lord's supper instituted, the agony in the garden, the arrest, mock trial, crucifixion, death and burial. An account of the resurrection is given in chapter 16, and the book comes to a close.

With this simple outline of Christ's life mastered, one will be prepared to appreciate the added features of it which are given in the other gospels.

### IV. The Early Church in Action.

After the Gospels, the book of Acts is the most important one to study and to master. Here the activity of the early disciples, the wondrous progress of the gospel, the marvelous triumph of the Christian church, are described in graphic terms. In the four Gospels the fundamental principles of Christianity are set forth; the religion of Christ is embodied in a Person. In the epistles, these principles are seen in their practical application in the lives of individuals and of churches. In the book of Acts a picture is presented of Christianity as preached throughout the Roman Empire. The disciples, endued with power from on high, begin to bear witness to Jesus and the resurrection. The church is in motion. Christianity is aggressive. The new kingdom is rapidly extending its bounds. Under the energizing influence of the Holy Spirit, the gospel is carried beyond the limits of

Palestine, nor does the narrative end until it is established in the proud capital of the Gentile world. The new movement is full of life and power. "So mightily grew the word of the Lord and prevailed."

The style of the book is wonderfully vivid. Especially is this noticeable if one reads it through at a sitting. Its narrations are often exciting, at times even thrilling. Marvels and miracles are not uncommon. Heroic characters are set before us in graphic portraiture. Pre-eminently it is the book of the Holy Spirit. It records the fulfilment at Pentecost of the promise of the Father given centuries before through the mouth of the prophet Joel, and renewed by the Lord Jesus himself. It gives us an account of the establishment of a new dispensation, that of the Spirit, which takes up and will carry on the work of Christ till, in the glory of the Father, he comes again. In this book, therefore, as in no other in the New Testament, the nature and the work of the Holy Spirit are emphasized. His divine personality is made evident. He moves upon the hearts of men. He convicts of sin. He imparts joy and gladness to believers. He gives wisdom to the disciples. He energizes them for service. He guides and protects them as they go forth upon their heroic and beneficent mission as heralds of the Master.

A review of so remarkable a book, so rich and varied in its contents, so stimulating and vivid in its history, so suggestive of the principles upon which the church of every age must act, cannot fail to be attended with profit.

That Luke was its author, as well as of the Gospel which bears his name, is the universal testimony of antiquity. Tradition fixes his birth place at Antioch, but

beyond the fact that he was a physician, very little is known of his early history. He seems to have been associated more or less closely with the apostle Paul, and from the use of the personal pronoun in some of his descriptions, it has been inferred that he was an eye-witness of some of the events which are recorded in his narrative. Indeed, his main design in the book by many is thought to be to set forth the life and labors of the apostle Paul, in which case the earlier chapters in regard to Pentecost and the events which follow, would simply be introductory. Luke commences his Gospel with a preface in which he dedicates it to his friend Theophilus. The book of Acts follows as a kind of sequel. In the first verse of the latter, reference is made to the former treatise; the dedication is to the same Theophilus; and the narrative is continued from the point where it had been suspended in the Gospel. The Acts may be described as volume II of a treatise of which Luke's Gospel is volume I.

Yet the record is fragmentary. It does not pretend to be complete. Only a selection of events is presented, such as would best illustrate the gradual development of the church under the impulse of the Holy Spirit. Two men only are prominent in the book—Peter, whose work was chiefly among the Jews,—Paul whose mission was mainly to the Gentiles. The early history of the church seems to run in two streams,—Jewish and Gentile,—which, however, gradually come together and form a mighty current, like that of the waters of the Mississippi and the Missouri. The book falls into two sections corresponding somewhat with the Jewish and Gentile lines of development. Peter is the most conspicuous figure of the

first or shorter section, which embraces the first twelve chapters, and Paul is the central figure of the second or larger section, which comprises the remaining fifteen chapters of the book.

### (I.) THE PETRINE SECTION.

The first fourteen verses of the book are introductory. The final interview of the risen Lord with the disciples is described, and a fuller account is given of his ascension than is found in Luke's Gospel. Then follows a brief account of the meeting for prayer of the eleven with the women and other believers in the upper room, very likely where Christ and the disciples had gathered for the last supper, and where meetings seem to have been held during the ten days intervening between the ascension and Pentecost. The first and only recorded act of the apostolic band was the choice of one who had been a witness of the resurrection to fill the vacancy occasioned by the defection of Judas. At the close of ten days of continuous supplication for the promised enduement from on high to fit them for their mission, the heavenly baptism came. This Pentecostal effusion, with its strange manifestations and its tremendous results, is described in the second chapter. The disciples were anointed for their future work, and the preaching of Peter, in the power of the Spirit, led to the immediate conversion of three thousand people. An outline of this remarkable discourse is preserved. Thus a mighty impulse was given to Christianity at the very outset. Christ's kingdom was inaugurated with spiritual power. In a few words we are given a glimpse of the simple lives of these first believers in Jeru-

salem and their interesting experiment of communism. In the conditions then existing this experiment proved to be impracticable and was soon abandoned.

An account is next given at some length of the healing of the lame man by Peter at the Beautiful gate of the temple, the first apostolic miracle; of the amazement of the people and their coming together in crowds at Solomon's porch; of another sermon by Peter who was still under the power of the Spirit, and of another mighty impression made upon those who heard it; of the conversion of others of the wondering multitude, till the number of believers was increased to 5,000. (Ch. 3.) But such boldness as that of Peter, supported by John who was his constant companion, in charging upon the Jewish leaders and the people the crime of murdering their own Messiah, and the popular excitement which such a charge would naturally produce, could not long remain unnoticed by the Jewish authorities. Fearful of the consequences to which such a movement might lead, and stung by the apostle's utterances, they arrested Peter and John as disturbers of the peace and thrust them into prison. When, on the following day, they were brought before the Sanhedrin and were forbidden to preach further in the name of Christ, Peter, without the slightest wavering, replied that they proposed to obey God rather than men. As the charge against them of disorderly conduct could not be maintained, they were set at liberty, and continued to preach and to witness for Christ with great power. (Ch. 4.)

The story of Ananias and Sapphira is significant as showing God's abhorrence of falsehood. (Ch. 5.) Having joined in the communistic plan already mentioned,

they sought, in selling their possessions, to retain a portion of the money they had received, though denying that they had done so. Thereupon both of them were struck dead with a lie upon their lips.

In the sixth chapter we have an account of a division of labor in the Christian community. Deacons are appointed, men of good repute and full of the Holy Spirit, to assist in the burdensome work of ministering to the poor. By this means, the apostles are free to devote their entire time and strength to preaching the gospel. Stephen is mentioned first in the list of those who are set apart to this new office. He was full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and, in addition to the special duties assigned him, he wrought wonders and signs among the people. But so bitter was the hostility of the bigoted Jews to the preaching of the gospel, that he too was at length arrested. His masterly defence of the new faith, given in the seventh chapter, shows how the roots of the gospel are embedded in the Jewish Scriptures. So keenly, however, did Stephen's words cut the hearts of his listeners, that they "gnashed on him with their teeth," and in their anger cast him out of the city and stoned him. Meanwhile, looking steadfastly into heaven, it is declared that he saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at his side. Then, in the expressive words of the author of this book, "he fell asleep," the first Christian martyr. But his blood, as has since been the case with the blood of martyrs the world over, helped forward the cause for which he died. From this time on the work of the Master advanced more rapidly and extended more widely than ever. Contrary to the thought and purpose of its instigators, the persecution which followed the death of

Stephen was overruled for good. As the Christian believers, seeking to escape the fury of their enemies, were scattered abroad through the country, they "went about preaching the word." Many were led to believe and these in turn became witnesses of the gospel they had received. Thus in places where the gospel had never been heralded, even as far as Cyprus and Antioch, the truth of God was proclaimed. Saul, the inspiring spirit of the persecuting movement for the extermination of the Christian sect, and who had been present at the death of Stephen, consenting to it, was stricken down by a blinding light from heaven, as, "breathing, threatening and slaughter" against the Christians, he journeyed towards Damascus. (Ch. 9.) As a result of that experience—in which, as he afterwards declared, he saw and heard the Lord,—he himself became a Christian disciple, ready to devote himself to the service of Him whom he had persecuted so relentlessly. What more convincing evidence of the genuineness of the change which had come over him than thus openly to identify himself with an unpopular cause? It often requires courage of a high order to come out and publicly acknowledge that one's previous attitude, spirit, and life, have been wrong, but when there is reason for the step, it is the mark of a noble soul to take it. It seems strange that the Jews, who professed such loyalty to God, should have manifested such intolerance of spirit toward any class of people, least of all toward those who were as peaceful and harmless as were the early followers of Christ. This is only an illustration of the prejudice and mistaken zeal to which even Christians have sometimes yielded.

The evangelistic labors of Philip, another of the dea-

cons, in Samaria, were crowned with such success that Peter and John were sent from Jerusalem to assist him. The two apostles also made an evangelistic circuit of the Samaritan villages before they returned to the Holy City. The story of Philip's interview with the Ethiopian eunuch, sitting beside him in his chariot as they rode towards Gaza, explaining the Word to him and finally winning him to Christ, is familiar. (Ch. 8.)

Meanwhile Peter continued his activity in Jerusalem, performed various miracles, and later had the memorable vision on the housetop at Joppa, which first disclosed to his mind the truth that the gospel was not designed for the Jews, or for "our church," alone, as he and they had supposed, but as well for all classes of people in the Gentile world. Peter readily accepted this broader view of Christianity, a view which still needs emphasis. A little before the vision came to him, Cornelius,—a devout man, a Roman centurion stationed at Caesarea, some thirty miles north of Joppa,—also had a vision. He was directed to send for Peter, who would impart to him that instruction in spiritual things for which he longed. In this incident of Peter and the centurion, we see how God sometimes brings people together who have been previously prepared by his providence to impart and receive his gospel of grace. In response to the summons of the centurion, Peter went to Caesarea, in glad surprise taught the devout Roman the way of life, and received him and his household, Gentiles though they were, into the church. The descent of the Spirit while Peter spoke was a token of divine approval. (Ch. 10.) The door was now opened to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. In the closing part of the eleventh chapter of

the Acts, the work among them is described as progressing. At first the scattered members of the Jerusalem church had preached to their own countrymen only. At Antioch the gospel, accompanied by God's blessing, was boldly declared to the Gentiles also.

In the twelfth chapter we see Christianity for the first time in antagonism to kings. James, the first apostolic martyr, was put to death by the sword. Next Peter was arrested and imprisoned. Meanwhile earnest and constant prayer was made by the church for the release of the latter. In the record of his remarkable deliverance we are told that a divine light shone into his cell, that an angel appeared, that his chains fell off; that the angel led the way out of the prison, and that the doors silently opened by their own accord as they advanced. When Peter presented himself at the house where his friends were praying, they refused at first to believe that it was he.

With this twelfth chapter, the section of the book relating to Peter closes, and, save through his epistles, we learn little more of him. In this record of his influence and work, his firmness and courage are in striking contrast with his impulsive, vacillating conduct at the time of the arrest and crucifixion of the Lord. The grace of Christ, the energizing effect of the Spirit's work on his character, and the steadying influence of an all-engrossing purpose, have made him a new man. He is no more the changeful, unreliable, self-confident person of the later days of Christ's life, but the steadfast and trusted leader, the intrepid preacher to Jew and Gentile. He may have wavered in unguarded moments, as at Antioch, when Paul withstood him to the face (Gal. 2:11), but up to

that time he had maintained the leadership of the work which he had assumed at the beginning.

### (2.) THE PAULINE SECTION.

The conversion of Saul of Tarsus, afterward called Paul, has justly been regarded as the most important event, after Pentecost, in the history of the early church. Mighty consequences were involved in it—consequences which had to do not only with the extension of Christianity to distant lands, but with such an interpretation of it also, as to render it in truth what it was designed to be, a universal religion.

The period from the time when Paul entered upon his Christian career to the close of his life, was with him one of unparalleled activity. Converts were gathered wherever he went. The knowledge of Christ was spread from point to point, from city to city, throughout the Roman Empire, till it reached the imperial city itself. In the Pauline section of the book of Acts, or from the thirteenth chapter to its close, we have a record of this spread of Christianity, from which rich and stimulating lessons may be drawn for the Christian church of all ages. The section is made up chiefly of accounts of the several missionary journeys of the apostle, including the more striking incidents which befell him and his companions, the outlines of some of the most notable of his addresses, with a thrilling narrative, in closing, of his voyage and shipwreck as he journeyed toward the Roman capital to be tried before Cæsar to whom he had appealed.

At the close of the Petrine section of the Acts, the center of Christian activity had been transferred from

Jerusalem to Antioch. Here the first Gentile church was founded by disciples who had been driven thither by persecution. Here believers were first called Christians (Acts 11:26), a name which has adhered to them ever since. Antioch became a strategic point in the world-wide evangelism upon which the church was about to enter, and from this city Paul set out upon his missionary journeys.

The story of his first tour is contained in the thirteenth and fourteenth chapters of the book. Barnabas, who had previously sought Paul out at his Tarsus home to assist him in the rapidly developing work at Antioch, was his companion. Both were called to the missionary service by the Holy Spirit. We read that the Holy Spirit said: "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." And again: "So they, being sent forth by the Holy Spirit." Here the personality of the Spirit is recognized and taught, a fact which needs emphasis in this materialistic age. Thus sent forth, Paul and Barnabas were assured of the divine favor. The way opened before them, mighty obstacles were surmounted, hardships, persecutions, extreme perils were overcome, and their labors were crowned with success. God's providence without and his Spirit within, co-operated in their behalf.

On the island of Cyprus, for which they sailed from the port of Antioch, they fell in with Elymas the sorcerer, who was stricken with blindness,—a punishment for his attempt to hinder the pro-consul Sergius Paulus from receiving the gospel,—a perpetual warning to any who stand in the way of the salvation of others. Crossing to the coast of Asia Minor, the missionaries journeyed north-

ward until they came to Antioch in Pisidia. Here Paul delivered an address, of which a synopsis is preserved. Compelled at length, through persecution stirred up by bigoted Jews, to leave the place, the apostles went on to Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. At Lystra, the people were so impressed by a miracle of healing which Paul wrought upon a man who had been a cripple from his birth, that they were led to declare that the gods had come down to them in the likeness of men, and prepared at once to offer sacrifices to him and his companion. The horrified apostles promptly disclaimed any such distinction, refused to receive the proffered homage, and all the more earnestly set forth Jesus Christ whose ambassadors they were. It was glory enough for them to be co-workers with the Lord.

Thus, in the midst of constant opposition from narrow-minded Jews, and frequently in peril of their lives, the apostles continued their labors. On one occasion Paul was stoned until it was supposed that he was dead. But in spite of their hardships, the missionaries were filled with joy. They returned by the same route by which they had come, everywhere confirming the souls of the new-made disciples. Not only do men need to be converted, but to be instructed, strengthened, encouraged as well in the new life, and enlisted in active Christian service.

Reaching Antioch again, whence they had set out some months before, Paul and Barnabas rehearsed to the church the things which, through the help of God, had been wrought by them, a testimony which must have been particularly helpful and spiritually stimulating to all who listened to it.

The fifteenth chapter of Acts tells us of the first formal conference or council of the early church. It was held at Jerusalem, its object being, if possible, to reconcile the differing views of Gentile and Jewish Christians in regard to sundry matters of faith and practice. Should Gentile converts be compelled to accept and to carry out the rites and ceremonies—which were meaningless to them—under which the Jews had been trained and which they regarded as essential, or might they be excused from observing them? Paul championed the cause of the Gentile Christians, insisting that to compel them to be circumcised and to carry out the requirements of the Levitical law, which to his mind the coming of Christ had rendered obsolete, was to impose upon them a needless burden. The outcome of the discussion was that the broader view prevailed. Gentile Christians were relieved of a yoke of bondage which some of the Jews were determined they should bear. For a time at least, the disturbed elements in the church were harmonized, and a threatened crisis was averted.

Soon after returning from Jerusalem, Paul left Antioch for his second missionary tour. (Ch. 15: 36-41.) This time Silas was his companion. Passing through Asia Minor—having been forbidden by the Spirit to preach the word in the province of Asia, and not being suffered to go into Bithynia—they came down to Troas. Here they were summoned in vision to go into Macedonia. Immediately they set sail from Troas to go as they were bidden. Coming to Philippi, the gospel was for the first time proclaimed in Europe, and the first Christian church on its soil was soon established. (Ch. 16.) Here Paul cast out an evil spirit from a certain maid who "brought

much gain to her masters by soothsaying." Thereupon, the hope of their gain being taken away, her owners brought false charges against the missionaries, had them arrested, and caused them, after public scourging, to be thrust into prison. Following this were the earthquake, the jailer's fear, his conversion, and his subsequent kindly treatment—an evidence of his change of heart—of his prisoners. At Thessalonica some of their bigoted and jealous countrymen instigated a riot, and they were compelled to depart by night to Berea. (Ch. 17: 1-14.) To the credit of the Berean Jews it is recorded that they were of a more noble spirit than those of Thessalonica, in that they carefully examined the Scriptures to determine whether the things which Paul preached were true or false.

After this Paul went on to Athens, that center of Greek culture, and here gave the address on Mars' Hill in which he declared the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. The people, eager to hear some new thing, listened attentively until he spoke of the resurrection, when their dissent became so outspoken as to render it impossible to continue his address. (Ch. 17: 15-34.) From Athens he went to Corinth, where he labored for a considerable period, and founded a church to which he afterward sent two important epistles. Thence he sailed to Syria, visiting Ephesus by the way. Landing at Caesarea, he went up to Jerusalem and afterward returned to Antioch. Many churches had been founded, and the work of the Lord had grown and been multiplied. (Ch. 18: 1-22.)

Not long after this, the apostle's third missionary journey was begun. First revisiting a number of places

in Asia Minor where he had preached on preceding journeys, he came to Ephesus. Here he remained for nearly three years. His work was remarkably successful, although here, as elsewhere, the preaching of the truth stirred up opposition. The trade of the silversmiths was interfered with and they started an uproar. A great mob collected, rushed into the large open theater, nor could anything stop its clamor or induce it to withdraw until it was warned by the town clerk of the serious consequences which might follow. (Ch. 19.) Escaping from attempted violence upon his person, Paul left the city, journeyed to Macedonia and Greece, and later returned to Jerusalem. At Miletus he held an affecting meeting with the elders of the Ephesian church, for whom he had sent to visit him while his vessel waited there. Paul spoke very tender words to them, it being his conviction that he would never again behold their faces. Throughout his journey, indeed, he was oppressed with forebodings of ill awaiting him at the Holy City, but not even the urgent entreaties of friends at the different places which he visited could persuade him to alter his plans. He believed it to be his duty to go to Jerusalem. (Ch. 20, 21 : 1-15.) Reaching the city, these forebodings were soon realized. He was set upon by his enemies, a tumult was raised, and he was nearly torn in pieces. Rescued before it was too late by Lysias the chief captain of the Roman guard, he obtained permission to address the angry throng from the stairway leading to the castle. It was of no avail; nothing could allay the hostility of the more narrow-minded Jews toward the liberal-minded apostle. (Ch. 22.) His address next day before the Jewish High Council to which he was taken, resulted no more

favorably. (Ch. 23: 1-10.) A plot to take his life having been discovered, he was sent under a guard of soldiers by night to Caesarea. (Ch. 23:11-34.) Here he was obliged to remain in prison for two years before coming to trial. (Ch. 24, 25.) His magnificent defense before Agrippa is given in substance in Acts 26. Despairing of justice, he was constrained to appeal to Cæsar as was his privilege as a Roman citizen. This necessitated his being sent to Rome, whither, under guard, he soon set sail.

It was on this voyage that the long-continued and terrific storm occurred, which, after indescribable suffering on the part of all on board the ship, resulted in their shipwreck upon the coast of Malta. During all these days of awful suspense, Paul was calm and confident, and by his cheerful and hopeful words sought to comfort those around him. It was by following his directions that crew and passengers were finally brought safely to land. (Ch. 27.) Wintering at Malta, during which time Paul embraced every opportunity to teach and preach, his journey was resumed in the early spring. From Puteoli, still under guard, he traveled by the Appian Way toward Rome. Brethren from the city met him at Appia Forum. Their presence led him to "thank God and take courage." (Ch. 28: 15.)

At Rome Paul was obliged to wait another two years for his trial, but meanwhile was permitted to abide in his own hired house. Nor was he hindered from preaching to all who came to see him. Even to the different guards who were in charge of him and were chained to him, he declared the glad tidings. ( Ch. 27: 16-30.) It was during this period that he wrote some of these pro-

foundly spiritual epistles which have ever since blessed the church and the world, as well as those to whom they were originally addressed.

Here the narrative abruptly ends,—why we cannot tell. It breaks off where we are exceedingly anxious to learn more. A thousand things may have prevented Luke from writing further. It has been supposed that Paul was released from his confinement, that he engaged in yet other missionary journeys, that he was again arrested, in a season of persecution, that this time he was not acquitted but sentenced to death. However this may be, and incomplete as the story of Paul's life is, the author of the book of Acts has accomplished his purpose. He has shown how powerfully the Spirit wrought, how mightily the work of the Lord prevailed, and how faithfully God's chosen vessel to the Gentiles fulfilled his mission. Paul is the hero of the second section of the book. He is represented as a model of consecration, of unwearied devotion, a missionary of the cross to lands in darkness, a broad-minded, large-hearted, providential man.

Without delaying to gather up the many practical lessons which are suggested all through the book of Acts, we may allude to two or three which stand out with special prominence. An important one in regard to the nature, the work, and the energizing power of the Holy Spirit, has perhaps been already sufficiently indicated.

Another is in regard to apostolic preaching. It was always and everywhere centered upon Jesus Christ. This was the one thought which seemed to fill the apostles' minds—the crucified, risen, exalted, living, and all-con-

trolling Christ, through whom and whom alone there is remission of sins, and whose grace is adequate to the soul's profoundest needs. They themselves had tested the gospel's power—knew from their own experience what it is able to do, Paul in particular having put it to test under the most trying circumstances. Thus they could speak from personal knowledge, and so with authority, of its reality and power. This same gospel is the need of men today. It is still the "power of God unto salvation," the only remedy ever given to the world for the cure of the awful malady of sin and for relieving the crushing burden of human sorrow, while it alone furnishes solid ground of hope for the life to come. When the personal and living Christ and His all-sufficient gospel no longer constitute the central theme of preaching; when human philosophy, speculation, or a different gospel which is not another gospel, is substituted, the pulpit will lose its power.

Another lesson made plain from the book of Acts, especially from the Pauline section of it, is the divine authorization of the work of foreign missions. To this work, indeed, the book is mainly devoted. The gospel in its very nature is a missionary gospel. This is its spirit. Nothing would seem to be plainer than the attitude of our Lord on the subject. His last command to the disciples to "go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation," comes ringing down the centuries to their successors. The marvelous results of foreign missions during the past century are an evidence that the favor of God rests upon the work.

A final lesson, personal in character, is to be derived from the great apostle himself—from his consecration,

from his indomitable purpose, from his tremendous enthusiasm in behalf of the cause of Christ. What an example he has set for all time! From the moment when the light flashed in upon his soul as he neared Damascus, he courageously and promptly gave up everything, all his earthly prospects, and cast in his lot with the despised cause of Christ and the despised disciples whom before he had so violently persecuted. Then, prompted by the love of Christ which burned within him, he began to tell the glad tidings. And although by many his efforts were not appreciated; although he was opposed and persecuted for doing what he believed himself called of God to do; although enemies everywhere were on his track and sought often to take his life, nothing could hinder him from persisting in carrying out his purpose. For years he continued to go up and down the empire, east and west, through its length and breadth, upon this mission of heralding the good news of Christ to those who were in spiritual darkness. It was a deep, all-absorbing, a mighty enthusiasm for a personal, living Christ, which impelled him, —an enthusiasm which laid hold of that which was deepest in his nature, and grew stronger and stronger with the years. We may well pray for more of the same spirit for ourselves.

### V. An Apostle's Letter.

A brief outline of one of the most practical of Paul's numerous epistles,—his first to the Christians of Corinth, —may prove suggestive with reference to the study of others.

Corinth was a city which, for its luxury, splendor, and

voluptuousness, was one of the most noted in Greece. Its wickedness had passed into a proverb. Paul had labored here, in connection with his second missionary journey, for many months. As a result, a strong and flourishing church was established. A few years later, while at Ephesus, Paul wrote his first epistle to it. Since he had left Corinth, there had been a great change in the situation and that for the worse. Grave irregularities and abuses had arisen in the church, the knowledge of which must have caused the apostle's heart to ache. Of this condition of things he learned from Apollos who had labored there for some time, going from Ephesus, but who had now returned,—and also by questioning the messengers who had come to him bearing a letter from the church which contained sundry inquiries. By reading bebetween the lines of this letter he was able to gather much. He perceived indications of trouble.

It was in response to this letter and to the situation in the Corinthian church as he had learned of it, that he wrote the epistle under consideration, the First Epistle to the Corinthians. In it he deals plainly and powerfully with the questions which had been submitted to him, nor does he hesitate to rebuke, exhort, praise, blame, as the occasion demands. Much in the epistle is of a purely local character, but many principles are brought out which are of universal application.

The topics considered in the epistle may be conveniently grouped under these five heads, each of which may be studied to advantage by itself:

1. The factional difficulties in the church. (Ch. 1-4.)
2. Certain immoralities and irregularities which had entered into it and threatened to destroy it. (Ch. 5, 6.)

3. Certain specific questions which had been referred to Paul. (Ch. 7-11.)

4. Difficulties resulting from a variety of spiritual gifts and other causes. (Ch. 12-14.)

5. The question of immortality and the resurrection. (Ch. 15.)

1. The discussion of the first point—the factional difficulties in the church—covers four chapters, or one-fourth of the chapters of the epistle. Paul does not enter at all into the question as to which of the parties in the church is right, or which is wrong. In so far as the members of the church had yielded to the spirit of party, or had grouped themselves around this man or that, all were wrong. If they were truly in Christ, there would be oneness of spirit among them.

2. Next Paul deals with certain immoralities and irregularities which had crept into the church and which threatened to destroy it. (Ch. 5, 6.) With fiery indignation he declares that the man who is openly immoral and who refuses to desist from his scandalous conduct, whatever his social standing may be, must be summarily cut off from Christian fellowship. He sets forth the arguments against impurity with a clearness never before equaled. The disposition of church members to go to law before heathen courts is next considered, and rebuked.

3. Chapters seven to eleven are devoted to answering certain specific questions which had been submitted to Paul in the letter from the church. One was in regard to celibacy and marriage. In reply the apostle does not pretend to speak with divine authority, but simply gives his own personal opinion in the matter. Another ques-

tion was in regard to eating meat which had been placed before idols in sacrifice. In reply Paul sets forth the great Christian principle of self-denial for the sake of others. Another question still had reference to behavior in public assemblies and the place and conduct of women in them. In general the advice given is suitable for all ages. That relating to woman's speaking in meetings—prohibiting it—was manifestly suggested by conditions then existing. It was not intended to be a permanent prohibition. There would be no occasion for it when these conditions should no longer exist.

4. A fourth topic—treated in chapters twelve to fourteen—had reference to difficulties resulting from a variety of spiritual gifts, and other causes. Here occurs that exquisite gem, the thirteenth chapter. The greatest of all spiritual gifts, one which is really inclusive of all the rest, and which is to be sought with all diligence, is charity, or love.

5. Lastly, Paul considers (ch. 15) questions pertaining to immortality and the resurrection, concerning which many misconceptions prevailed. What Paul says on this subject constitutes an immortal passage in his writings. His doctrine of a personal spiritual resurrection is the foundation upon which the whole fabric of Christianity rests.

The epistle ends with a reference to the collection which the apostle was making for the brethren at Jerusalem, and to his own plans, with various messages also and a benediction. As the late Dr. Wm. M. Taylor says: "It is a truly glorious epistle, standing before us in its mingled majesty and simplicity like some Alpine range, whose peaks seem to pierce the sky, while round its base

the pine forest waves in the breeze and the wild flowers exhale their sweet fragrance."

Three great lessons seem to dominate the espistle. 1. The necessity and the duty of unity of spirit in the midst of diversity of judgment. 2. Personal liberty should be exercised in love—or the duty of self-denial for the sake of others. 3. While in the world, exposed to its temptations and snares, Christian people are to be so girded by divine strength—which is available to all—as not to be of it.

# IV

# Study of Bible Characters.

## FOREWORD.

The Scriptures present a wide variety of characters, which are faithfully portrayed in both their excellencies and shortcomings. All phases of life and motive are brought to view in these Bible examples. Some of them, even long prior to the dawning of the light of the Christian dispensation, were men of a mighty faith (Heb. II). Many, on the other hand, were weak and vacillating in spirit, some were indifferent to spiritual things altogether, some were utterly unworthy, continually doing "that which was evil" in God's sight. What more suggestive and instructive themes for study than these Bible characters, the counterparts of which may everywhere be found today,—object lessons of weaknesses and sins which are to be shunned, and of the virtues and nobler qualities which are to be emulated? Furthermore, by the thorough study of a few of the more notable personages of the Bible, regarding them as landmarks or centers of study, essentially the entire narrative of Bible history may be covered and without difficulty be fixed in the mind. Practical suggestions to assist the student in this kind of Bible study are embodied in the different sections of the chapter.

## STUDY OF BIBLE CHARACTERS.

The biographical method of Bible study may be pursued with different ends in view. Through making use of certain well known characters as landmarks, an outline of the entire history included in the Bible may be gained,—something which is specially important for beginners in Bible study. By making these characters centers for the study of particular periods of that history, a more detailed knowledge may easily be acquired. Studying the characters themselves, they will be found to yield valuable lessons of wisdom and of inspiration for personal benefit. These methods of study, with illustrative examples, will be considered in order.

### I. As Landmarks.

1. *Abraham,* (Gen. ch. 12-25) with whom authentic biblical history may be said to begin, was born somewhere about the year B. C. 2000, speaking in general terms. According to the old but not now received chronology (Usher's) which puts creation at B. C. 4004, his birth would fall about midway between creation and the Christian era, in which case the first half of Biblical history would be covered by the first eleven chapters of Genesis. Abraham thus becomes an important landmark. In connection with the story of his life, some of the leading events preceding it, as recorded, and the lives of the suc-

ceeding patriarchs—Isaac, Jacob and Joseph—may be noted to advantage.

For the next landmark we select *Moses* (Exodus and ff.), approximately about 500 years after Abraham. He appeared perhaps a century or two after B. C. 1500, yet near enough to that date for our purpose. His life affords a most interesting study. Not much is known of the long sojourn of the Israelites in Egypt, until the story of Moses begins. Providentially prepared for his mission by his life in Egypt and his forty years of wilderness discipline in the Sinaitic peninsula, then formally called to it by the theophany at the burning bush, he inaugurated and carried forward the movement which led finally to the conquest and occupancy of Canaan by the Israelites. There was first the exodus from Egypt, then the wilderness life for more than a generation, finally the conquest of the land of promise by Joshua and division of the territory among the several tribes. Succeeding these events was the era of the Judges, which continued until the time of the monarchy.

After nearly a hundred years of the monarchy, or about B. C. 1000, it reached its height in *Solomon* (1 Kings, ch. 1-11, 2 Chron. 1-9), whom we will take for our next landmark. As preceding him, we may glance briefly at Samuel, the last and most notable of the judges, as he was also an illustrious prophet; at Saul and David, Solomon's predecessors in the kingly office, both of whom Samuel anointed. Solomon is at about the middle point between Abraham and Christ. Naturally in connection with studying his life, that momentous event which occurred immediately after his death, the division of the kingdom, will be considered. After this, for about two hundred years,

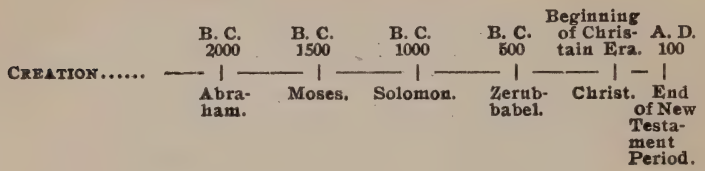
two small, weak, often inharmonious kingdoms, Israel and Judah, existed side by side until the former, and later the latter was destroyed, and the leading inhabitants were taken into exile.

Passing on about 500 years from Solomon, we come to *Zerubbabel,* near the middle point between Solomon and Christ, or approximately B. C. 500 (Ezra 1 and ff.). He is not as prominent a Bible figure as some, but he lived at a point in Bible history which renders it fitting to select him as a landmark. For fifty years, (or seventy years counting from the first deportation from Jerusalem) the exile of the Jews in the region of Babylon has continued. Now, through the proclamation of king Cyrus, made shortly after coming to the throne, permission is granted them to return to their native land, and Zerubbabel becomes the Jewish leader of the return movement. Other return movements later are recorded, Ezra and Nehemiah being the leaders. During the period succeeding the latter authentic Old Testament history closes, and for nearly four hundred years there is an interruption in the Biblical narrative.

Then *Christ* is born, and the Christian era begins. The New Testament period is comparatively brief, covering only about one hundred years from the birth of Christ. Yet during this time, Christ's mission was accomplished; the apostles did their work of carrying the gospel to the countries about; and the Gospel narratives, the book of Acts, the epistles, and Revelation, were written.

Thus we have the Bible story in outline, with prominent landmarks, mostly at intervals of approximately five hundred years, told in connection with Bible char-

acters. This outline, which it will be helpful to fix in mind, and which may easily be remembered, may be indicated as follows (the years being in round numbers):




## II. As Centers.

2. A *second* aim which may be pursued with profit in connection with the study of Bible characters, is that of familiarizing oneself, through such study, with particular periods or important sections of Biblical history. Some prominent character of the period which is under consideration may be taken as a basis or starting point, and one's studies may gather about or work out from that as a center. By taking up in succession the few great periods into which Bible history may be divided, one may in this way, and without difficulty, soon master the essential framework of the entire Biblical narrative. At the risk of some repetition—which indeed can hardly be avoided in considering and exemplifying different methods of Bible study—we may illustrate.

(1.) For the study of the *Patriarchal Period,* we may take Abraham, as before (Gen. 12-25), as our starting point, making as thorough a study of his life and times as possible. We glance at the record preceding Abraham as far back at least as Noah. The story of Abraham himself will be found full of interest, especially

in view of contemporary history as brought to light by the archeological discoveries of the past half century in Babylonia and other oriental regions. A much more advanced state of civilization prevailed when Abraham first appeared upon the scene than has commonly been supposed. The conditions which existed in the land of Canaan when Abraham emigrated to it, will naturally receive attention. As the patriarch sojourned for a time in Egypt, the situation there also will be inquired into, and much assistance will be gained from the deciphered hieroglyphic inscriptions of ancient times as they have been brought out by the discoveries of recent decades. There is not much in Isaac's life to detain the student. The story of Jacob is more eventful, while that of Joseph is especially interesting. These narratives follow that of Abraham in the book of Genesis to its close. Thus by making the life of Abraham our starting point, we may easily become familiar with the entire patriarchal period. The study of the character itself of Abraham, his faith, the visions granted him, and his covenants with Jehovah, will yield valuable lessons.

(2.) For becoming familiar with the period of the *Exodus,* the study of Moses (Ex. Num., also Levit. and Deut.) will be the most suitable. No other character indeed could so well form the basis for it. The most essential things in the period are covered by his life. First learning what we may about the sojourn of the Israelites in Egypt after the time of Joseph, and how they were brought under oppression at length, we come to the story of Moses himself, his childhood, youth, manhood; his providential preparation both in Egypt and the wilderness, for his high mission; his entrance upon that

mission assisted by his brother Aaron, the struggle with Pharaoh, the plagues, and the exodus itself. Then there was the year spent at Sinai, with the giving of the law, the legislation enacted, the organizing of the nation. Following this were the years of nomadic life in the wilderness, after the Israelites—through their lack of faith—were turned back at Kadesh Barnea. This had been their first objective point after leaving Sinai, from which they had hoped to advance and take possession of the promised land. Through all these years of wandering, Moses was the patient leader. Finally the conquest of the country to the east of the Jordan was accomplished, and preparations were made for the invasion of Canaan from that quarter. But here Moses died, and the work was completed under Joshua, his successor. It was a great life which Moses lived, and full of suggestive lessons. It made a lasting impression upon the Hebrew people. He was one of the meekest, most patient of men, a wise leader, a man who lived in constant communion with God. By a study of the life of Moses we are able readily to grasp this most important section of the history of the chosen people.

(3.) For the period of the *Judges,* into which Scripture gives us but few glimpses, the study of Gideon (Judges 6-8), one of the most noted of the military leaders of that age, will afford us a good center from which to work out. A thorough understanding of the situation in his time, will give an insight into the general situation during the entire period. This period is covered by the book of Judges, including the story of Ruth which may be regarded as a part of it, certainly as related to the same age. There was no central government among

the tribes from the time of Joshua's conquest, preceding this period, to that of the monarchy succeeding it. Nor was there much co-operation among them save as danger from a common enemy threatened all or a part of them. Then some leader arose who was able to rally the people, and the danger was averted. It was in such an emergency that Gideon arose. The story of his victory over the immense host of Midianitish invaders who had long been a terror to the people,—completely routing them by a stratagem in the night time with his chosen three hundred and their torches and pitchers and rams' horns,—is thrilling. After him, as before his time, other valiant leaders appeared as other emergencies called for them, until the period came to a close with Samuel (1 Sam.), who was both judge and prophet. Gideon was at first reluctant—distrustful both of himself and of God—to undertake the responsibility of leadership. But he was at length encouraged to do so, and, the decision once made, he threw himself into the work with all his might, trusting in God for the success which finally crowned his efforts.

(4.) The *period of the Monarchy* is so extended and so important, if we include in it both the single and divided kingdom, that it might perhaps be studied to better advantage in the two divisions. In this case, David might be chosen as a center for the first division, the period of the single kingdom. For the second division, Elijah would afford a starting point for studying the history of the northern kingdom, and Isaiah or Hezekiah for the southern.

If we take the entire period for our study, the life of Solomon (1 K. ch. 1-11, 2 Chron. 1-9) will be the

most suitable center from which to conduct our investigations. Under him the single kingdom reached its highest point, and immediately afterward occurred its disruption through the unwisdom of his son Rehoboam. The latter became king of the southern kingdom, or kingdom of Judah,—and Jeroboam, a popular leader, of the northern, or kingdom of Israel. In such a study there would first of all be a brief survey of the events preceding Solomon, from the time of Samuel, who, after the people had demanded a king, anointed the first two kings, Saul and David, Solomon's predecessors in the kingly office. Saul's reign was not a conspicuous success. Under David the kingdom was united, strengthened, and greatly extended. Solomon's reign was one of peace, of internal improvements, and material prosperity. Among the numerous public structures which he erected, the temple was the most notable. During the latter part of his reign, disintegrating influences were at work, —primarily in his own character. After his death these influences came to a climax in the division of the kingdom.

For the next two hundred years two feeble and not always harmonious kingdoms existed side by side. It was a period of religious declension and of prophetic activity. The northern kingdom fell B. C. 722, the southern B. C. 587. The leading inhabitants in each case were deported far to the eastward. We hear nothing afterward of the exiles from the northern kingdom. Those from the southern were taken to the regions of Babylon, from which many of them returned later. The character of Solomon, though at first promising, afterward degenerated, and is disappointing. There should

be a careful study of contemporary history in connection with this entire period.

(5.) For the last period of Old Testament history —that of the *Captivity* and *Return* and the events which followed—a study of Nehemiah (Book of Neh.) will pave the way to a comprehensive understanding of it. Of course the captivity will be reviewed, the first return under Zerubbabel, the second under Ezra. Under Nehemiah the walls of the city were rebuilt and the government of the province was put upon a more substantial footing than before. As we are to make a special study of Nehemiah later, we will not dwell upon him further here. As to the time between the Old Testament and the New, which may be included in this period, it will be sufficient to say that the Persian supremacy of the Jewish province was succeeded by that of Alexander the Great (B. C. 333), the Ptolemys of Egypt and the Macedonian kingdom of Syria alternating from 320 to 203 B. C., the northern power finally prevailing in 198 B. C., after which the Jews were set free by the Maccabean princes (B. C. 163), and remained independent until B. C. 63. Then began the Roman supremacy, which continued through the New Testament period and beyond.

(6.) Coming to the *New Testament* period, which includes about 100 years after the birth of Christ, we may subdivide it for convenience into two parts, studying the life of Christ as found in the four Gospels for the first, and that of the apostles, as given in the books of Acts, for the second. In studying the life of Christ, it is important to get in mind as clear an outline of it as possible. A Harmony of the Gospels will be of service here. First, the birth of Christ at Bethlehem, his youth

and manhood at Nazareth, his baptism by John in the Jordan, the temptation following, his entrance upon his ministry,—first in Judea, then notably and mainly in Galilee,—then the last journey through Perea to Jerusalem, where occurred the crucifixion, resurrection and ascension. Second, in studying the apostolic section of the period (The Acts), we may either make Paul the central figure of the whole, or, subdividing further, make Peter the central figure of the first part (Acts 1-12), and Paul of the second (Acts 13 to end). The three missionary journeys of the latter will form an important part of this study. The epistles belong at different points through the narrative.

Thus by a somewhat thorough study of about half a dozen prominent Bible characters, making them centers for the study of large and important periods, we are able to gain a pretty distinct bird's eye view over the entire Bible field.

### III. Characters.

A *third* aim in this biographical method of studying the Bible, is the study of its characters for their own sakes and the profitable lessons which may be gathered from them, regardless of their relations to other persons, or events, or periods. There are few characters indeed, which are referred to at any length in the Scriptures, which are not likely richly to repay the student's researches. Their nobler qualities should be emulated—those less so should be shunned.

In addition to the characters which have already been

dwelt upon, what an interesting and suggestive study, for example, is afforded by the life of Joseph (Gen. 37-50), one of the purest, noblest characters in the Bible. Every part of his life is suggestive—his childhood; the treatment he received from his brothers, their sale of him into Egypt, their deception of his father Jacob; Joseph's experience in Egypt, his resistance of temptation, his imprisonment, his release, his promotion; then the famine in Canaan, Joseph's brethren coming to Egypt to buy corn, his making himself known to them at length after satisfying himself as to their change of spirit, the emigrating of his father Jacob with all his sons and their families and flocks, to make their home in Egypt. What lessons in regard to the workings of divine providence and of how evil is often overruled for good, are impressed by the story of Joseph.

Joshua (Bk. of Joshua) is another interesting character. He was an Israelite in whom was no guile. He first appears upon the scene as leader of the successful campaign against the Amalekites soon after the exodus (Ex. 17). His faith and courage are strikingly manifested at Kadesh Barnea in connection with the report of the spies (Num. 13). At the death of Moses he was appointed his successor, and under him the conquest of Canaan was accomplished. (See last section of chapter on "Bible Study by Periods.")

In some respects the character of David is one of the most interesting in the Bible. (1 Sam. 16 to end, 2 Sam., 1 K. 1, 2, also 1 Chron.) As a youth he watched his father's flocks in the little plain to the east of Bethlehem, where later, at the time of the birth of Christ, shepherds kept watch by night over their flock. His victory over

the Philistine giant Goliath brought him into public prominence. He was loyal to Saul as king in spite of Saul's ill treatment of himself. He and Jonathan, Saul's son, were devoted friends. As king, David did much to strengthen and develop the kingdom. He fell into grievous sin, but he also repented and made confession. By reason of the good spirit which was in him, in spite of his weakness and sin, he was a man, we read, after God's own heart. He wrote many of the Psalms, in which the fruitage of his personal religious experience is set forth. His spirit is one to be emulated.

The book of Daniel contains many things which have been misunderstood, and concerning which men still differ. But there can be little room for difference of opinion as to the noble and heroic character of Daniel himself. The story of his life, as given in the book which bears his name, is full of inspiration. As a young man he manifested great moral bravery, and this quality was ever afterward characteristic of him. He was a man of prayer, and this was his reliance in trial and danger, or when in need of special wisdom.

Other Old Testament characters which may be studied with profit are Josiah, Esther, Ruth, Elijah, Elisha, Hezekiah, Ezra, and many others. The New Testament also abounds in subjects for fruitful character study,—such as John the Baptist, Nicodemus, Zaccheus, Stephen, Philip, Mary and Martha, John the apostle, James, Barnabas, Timothy.

Take John the Baptist. (Matt. 3, 11, 14, Mark 1, 6, Luke 3, 7, John 1, 3.) It was his exalted function to be the herald of the Messiah whose coming had been so long foreshadowed in the Old Testament, and to point

him out to men. Not much is known of John's early life, save that to carry out a religious vow, he retired to the wilderness, from which he at length emerged and began to call upon men everywhere to repent in preparation for the Messiah's advent, baptizing them in the Jordan. His preaching made a profound impression and multitudes gathered from all parts of the country to listen to him. Finally Jesus himself came, and in connection with his baptism John recognized him as the one whose approaching advent he had been proclaiming. The descent and the abiding upon Jesus of the Holy Spirit was the sign by which John knew him. After Jesus began his ministry we hear little more of John. As the former increased, the latter decreased. Soon after, John was imprisoned at the command of Herod by whom he was afterward beheaded. As we study John's character we are impressed with his faith and courage. Christ spoke of him in the highest terms. Yet humility was also one of John's conspicuous traits. There was no envy or jealousy in him. His life was absorbed in the success of his Master. If his faith in regard to Christ suffered an eclipse at one time as he languished in prison, it was only temporary.

For a character sketch more in detail, we select, out of many attractive ones which are available, that of Nehemiah, an Old Testament patriot.

## IV. An Old Testament Patriot.

There are many great characters in Old Testament history—great in their faith, in their judicial qualities of mind, in their prophetic insight, in their ability to lead men. Some of these characters rise far above their contemporaries, far above the age in which they lived, so that as we review the wide field of Biblical history, they loom up before us as the few giant peaks of a mighty mountain range. Such were Abraham, Moses, Samuel, Isaiah, and—Nehemiah, a born leader of men. No one of them was perfect, no one was free from blemishes of character. Some of these blemishes were very serious judged by the moral standards of today, or even by those of that early age, but each in his time exhibited qualities in certain directions which have given him his name and fame.

The story of Nehemiah reads more like a romance than like sober matter of fact history. The book which bears his name may be read at a sitting; and yet what rapid shifting of scenes is presented in it, what vivid narration, what a succession of thrilling incidents and startling events, what marvelous success achieved in face of gravest obstacles! For practical piety and courage, for transparency of character, for executive ability and promptness of action, and for an all-absorbing enthusiasm in carrying out a noble aim, Nehemiah stands unrivaled among the ancient heroes of the faith. In him we have an illustration of the way in which Providence favors those whose plans are formed in prayer, are linked with God's purposes, and are carried out in dependence upon him.

Chronologically, the incidents and events of Nehemiah's career as recorded began B. C. 445. At the time the narrative opens he was cup-bearer to the Persian king Neh. 1:11) at his palace in Susa, or Shushan, the winter residence of that monarch,—a city whose stupendous remains astonish the traveler of the present day. His position brought him into close relations with the king, and was one of great responsibility. About ninety years previous, the restoration of the exiled Jews to their own country began. Permission to return having been granted by king Cyrus upon his accession to the Persian throne, many availed themselves of the opportunity, and a large company, under the leadership of Zerubbabel, made the journey to Jerusalem, which was distant from Susa about 700 miles in a direct line. ( Ezra 1, 2.) About eighty years later another company of Jews, smaller than the first, was led to the Holy Land by Ezra. (Ezra 7:1-10.) Meanwhile communication was kept up between these western colonists and the Jews at the East, through which it became evident to the latter that serious obstacles were being encountered in rebuilding the city, and that the work was proceeding very slowly in consequence.

Having been visited by certain of his countrymen just arrived from Jerusalem, Nehemiah learned, to his sorrow,—for he loved his nation,—that although the walls of the city had been mostly rebuilt, they had been freshly broken down by jealous enemies, the gates burned, and that grave and increasing disorders prevailed throughout the province. At once he was seized with a desire to go to the relief of his suffering brethren and assist in putting the city in a condition for defence. But the way was not open to him to do so, and he felt reluctant—

it might have been hazardous in an oriental court—to request of the king the desired permission. In the circumstances there was little he could do but pray, and this he continued to do for four months in succession. Then, unexpectedly, his opportunity came. The king had observed traces of anxiety on the face of his trusted cup-bearer, and was led to inquire into the cause of it. Nehemiah frankly told him, whereupon the king became interested in his project, even going so far as to appoint him governor of the province of Judea, and to provide him with everything which was necessary to the carrying out of his beneficent plans. (Neh. 1-2:8.)

Thus equipped, Nehemiah started on his journey. As he was accompanied only by a small escort of horsemen he could travel rapidly, and very likely reached Damascus, to the governor of which he bore important letters, in a couple of months, or in half the time usually consumed by caravans. From Damascus his course to Jerusalem was probably by way of the Jordan valley. Though no mention is made of it, he was no doubt met on his arrival by the authorities of the city of Jerusalem and given a reception becoming his rank. (Ch. 2:9-11.) The precise scope of his commission was not known, but no one could fail to understand that in sending to the people one of their own race for governor, the king had been actuated by a friendly motive. If Nehemiah did not immediately divulge his purpose of restoring the once impregnable defences of the city, it was probably from prudential considerations. He well knew how jealously Jerusalem was regarded by her rivals, and how anxious they were that the city should be kept in such a condition of weakness and depression as to prevent her from outstrip-

ping them. He therefore proceeded with the utmost caution lest, his plans becoming known, they should in some way be frustrated.

First of all it was essential that Nehemiah gain a distinct conception of the extent of the ruins which were to be repaired. For this purpose he resolved to make a personal examination of the walls. To do so openly would be to proclaim his intentions. So he planned to do it secretly under cover of night. Three days after his arrival he started out to make a midnight circuit of the city outside of the walls. (Ch. 2: 12-15.) We may picture the scene. Darkness is brooding over the city. The people have retired and are asleep. Perhaps the moon has arisen, by the light of which, and the stars, Nehemiah will make his observations. He mounts his mule, and, accompanied by a few attendants on foot, sets forth. Had it been simply to observe the ruins, no better time could have been selected. There is a charm about ruins in the quiet of midnight, with the soft light of the moon falling upon them, which they do not possess at any other time. Travelers have often remarked this. The Colosseum at Rome is far more fascinating when viewed in the moonlight than during the day. The same is true of many of the old abbeys and cathedrals. Washington Irving describes the appearance of the Alhambra by moonlight as enchanting. The mighty ruins of Baalbeck present a glorious scene by the light of the moon and the stars. But Nehemiah was not out upon a pleasure trip. An earnest purpose filled his heart. He wanted to gain a clear understanding of the situation with a view to taking the steps necessary to remedy it.

The location of Jerusalem is interesting in the ex-

treme. Its site, no doubt, was essentially the same at the time of Nehemiah's visit as now, although since then the city has been taken and retaken, destroyed and rebuilt, several times. The position is naturally strong on all sides except the north. It is from this latter quarter that assaults have usually been made. On the east is the deep ravine of the Kidron. On the south and part of the west side is the valley of Hinnom. When Nehemiah first saw the walls they were broken in many places, and huge masses of masonry, tumbled about in confusion, were in the way of any one who would make a circuit of them. Nehemiah started from a point called the "valley gate," which is now believed, as a result of recent investigations, to have been at the southwest corner of the city. Then he proceeded in an easterly direction, viewing the broken walls as he went, to the "fountain gate," at the intersection of the Hinnom valley with the valley of the Kidron at the southeast corner. Turning northward, he came shortly to the "king's pool." Here he found the passage-way so choked with rubbish that he was obliged to dismount from the animal on which he was riding, and to proceed on foot. Continuing "by the brook," (i. e. the Kidron) he may have gone as far as the temple wall. At any rate, instead of going around the city, as many have supposed, he expressly states that he "turned back," finally re-entering the city at the valley gate from which he had set out. (Neh. 2: 15. Am. Revision) "And I turned back, and entered by the valley gate, and so returned." Then, in silence, he went to his lodging place, having rendered himself competent, by his observations, to form a comprehensive scheme for rapidly putting the entire wall in a state of repair.

He next called the leaders of the people together, told them how God had been directing him, how he had received a commission from the king, explained his plans, and appealed to them to take hold of the work with him, enlist the people in it, rebuild the walls at once, and put the city in a condition for defence against its enemies. In his address he manifested energy, decision, enthusiasm. The effect was electrical. The people joined in the cry: "Let us rise up and build." (Ch. 2: 16-18.) It was an undertaking beset with many difficulties and embarrassments. But Nehemiah soon brought order out of confusion, and the walls began to go up. It was not as when the pyramids were built, with tens or hundreds of thousands of men to do the work and with ample time in which to do it; here it was necessary to utilize the labor of all who were able to assist, and to complete the work as expeditiously as possible. Otherwise enemies in the regions roundabout, ever on the alert, and jealous lest Jerusalem become the leading city of the section, would have time to interpose obstructions, or forcibly interfere to thwart the undertaking.

Nehemiah's plan was, having quietly made all necessary preparations beforehand, to begin the work on a certain day, with all his forces at their posts along the entire course of the wall, then to push it rapidly forward to completion. The people were divided into groups, each group having its own leader. The names of the leaders of thirty-five groups or sections into which they were divided are given. (Ch. 3.) Each group was to be responsible for a definite portion of the wall, the part which was nearest the place where its members resided. Each man was thus set to "work over against his own house,"

as the suggestive expression is. Each would thus feel a personal interest in doing something to protect his own property. The priests labored upon the part of the wall and the gates nearest the temple. There were some who were not strictly residents of the city who yet felt a patriotic interest in its welfare, and joined heartily in the work of providing for its defence. On all sides volunteers pressed forward to assist in the work which now absorbed all thought and attention.

There was one painful exception to mar the harmony of the scene. We read that certain nobles held back,—"put not their necks to the work." (Ch. 3:5.) They did not oppose it, they simply held back, just as now whenever any enterprise is on foot for the public good, there are usually some who stand off, do nothing themselves, and criticise those who are willing to do their best. We can appreciate to some extent the greatness of the task these Jews had undertaken. Their numbers were comparatively few. There was an immense amount of rubbish to be cleared away. Then remember that the walls to be repaired were probably two or three miles in length. This would not seem to indicate a large city, but in oriental cities the houses are packed close together, and the streets are often only a few feet wide. Thus a large number of people can be housed in a small space. The portions of the walls to be repaired were several feet thick and many feet high, and a number of immense gates would have to be constructed to replace those which had been burned. Hard and difficult as was the task, the community was in admirable mood,—"the people had a mind to work" (ch. 4:6), and everything would have

gone forward with even greater dispatch than it did had not unexpected difficulties sprung up. These difficulties were of two sorts,—those which had their origin within the city, and those whose source was without. The first hindrance was an outgrowth of the poverty of the people, most of whom were reduced to serious straits for support. The few who were more favored, taking advantage of their condition, drove sharp bargains with their poor neighbors. They loaned them money at extortionate rates of interest, receiving in return mortgages upon their small farms, vineyards, and other property, or even upon the liberties of their sons and daughters, who became slaves in case the money was not paid when due. Thus debts were incurred which could never be met. Such a spirit, such heartlessness, such utter selfishness at such a time, on the one side, and such misery on the other, roused the spirit of Nehemiah. He was prompt to act and bold to condemn. Calling the money lenders together, he rebuked them sternly, summoned them to appear before an assembly of the citizens, and then turned upon them with scathing words. He had himself done his utmost to redeem the people from their distress, was living at his own charges out of regard for their condition, and was feeding many constantly at his own table free of expense to them or to the city, while they were enslaving their own brethren. Let them at once cancel the bonds they held, give back the property they had taken, remit the debts which were due. If these debts could be paid later, well and good; if not, let them be forgiven. His appeal was effective. Forced by shame the money lenders complied with the request. To clinch

the matter, Nehemiah bound them by an oath administered by the priests. So by his boldness and fearlessness, that difficulty was overcome. (Ch. 5.)

The next hindrance was from enemies without. The Jews seemed to have been hated by their neighbors owing to past difficulties and jealousy. A strong anti-Semitic feeling prevailed among the Samaritans at the north, the Ammonites across the Jordan, and the Arabians at the south. These enemies harassed the citizens of Jerusalem constantly,—at first through the sneering of their leaders, Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem, who, knowing that Nehemiah held a commission from the king, did not dare to molest them openly. These sneers availed nothing. Nehemiah pressed forward only the more vigorously. As the work advanced, however, and began to promise success, these three leaders entered into a league with neighboring tribes to attack Jerusalem and, if possible, destroy it. The attack was to be made in the night time, suddenly, and to be followed by a general massacre. Nehemiah was informed of these proceedings, and prepared to receive the enemy. He summoned all who could bear arms, giving them such weapons as were available—spears, bows, swords—and set them in open spaces behind those portions of the wall which were weakest. Then he gave directions as to the methods of defence and made a stirring appeal to them to fight manfully for their hearths and altars. The enemy, learning what had been done, gave up the plan of attack. But Nehemiah did not relax his vigilance. Half the people were kept at work upon the walls from the earliest dawn until the appearing of the stars, their swords at their sides, and their spears near at hand. The other half, fully armed, kept watch behind

them. As a still further precaution, Nehemiah kept a trumpeter at his side to sound an alarm, if at any moment it should be necessary.

Having failed in their plans thus far, these enemies next resorted to cunning and deceit. Snares were laid to entrap Nehemiah. The first proposition suggested impending danger. It was proposed that he should come out of Jerusalem to meet with Sanballat and his friends at a place called Ono, which was located some thirty miles to the west in the plain of Sharon. Perhaps he would be willing to hold a parley with them in the interest of peace and their common welfare. Nehemiah was not to be caught by any such trick. He well knew that these conspirators intended harm if they could once get him in their power. In reply he sent them a courteous but memorable answer: "I am doing a great work and I cannot come down." Why should the work cease and he go down to them? For the governor to have left Jerusalem at such a crisis would have been disastrous. Nothing daunted, the conspirators tried again and again, under various pretexts, to prevail upon him to come out for a conference, but each time he returned the same answer: "I am doing a great work and I cannot come down." Next they wrote him an open letter telling him that rumors were everywhere filling the air that he was plotting rebellion against the king and was seeking to have himself proclaimed ruler. It was especially important, therefore, that they have a conference. Nehemiah was not deceived by this device and sent back an indignant denial of the charges they had brought against him. (Ch. 6: 1-9.)

Nor was this all. Finding that none of their schemes

would work, they sent emissaries to plot mischief within the city, to stir up dissatisfaction, to encourage treason, and do everything in their power to thwart Nehemiah's plans—even to take his life. Prophets were bribed to do this dirty work. One of them went so far as to shut himself up as if in terror of his life, and to send word of a plan to murder himself and Nehemiah, suggesting that they conceal themselves in the Holy Place of the temple for safety. Nehemiah indignantly scorned such a proposition, and made another memorable reply: "Should such an one as I flee? and who is there, being such a one as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in." The place for him as leader was at the front, in the midst of danger, rather than cowardly to be hunting a place for his own safety and demoralizing the whole population by his example. For him to have fled would have been a signal for all to flee. (Ch. 6: 10-14.) At length, after all these perplexities, which were enough to discourage and dishearten any man but a Nehemiah, the walls were finished, the gates were set up, and a body of guards for them and for the temple duly organized. Under the existing circumstances the orders for guarding the city were unusually strict. The gates were not opened until the sun was high and the guards for the day were in their places. These guards were relieved at night but not until the gates were closed and barred. (Ch. 7: 1-4.)

It was fitting that there should be a public recognition of the completion of the work for the protection of the city. God's providence in it, in the events leading up to it, and his guardian care over the people during

its progress, had been marked. Nehemiah determined, therefore, to observe the event by a celebration which should be memorable. To this end he summoned the Levites out of the various cities and villages of the province to aid in the exercises. They brought with them their full array of musical instruments, cymbals, psalteries and harps. Trained minstrels were summoned also. The trumpets of the priests were sounded on one side, and the songs of the minstrels were loud on the other. Even the women and children joined in the general acclamation, and the joy of Jerusalem was heard afar off. Two processions were formed to move about the walls. Beginning probably on the west side, one procession, under the direction of Nehemiah, was to follow the course of the northern wall; the other, in charge of Ezra, who seems to have been present at that time, to follow the course of the southern wall. Both were to come together on the east side of the city in the immediate vicinity of the temple. Each procession consisted of a number of priests with trumpets, of Levites with musical instruments, of half of the princes of Judah, and a certain number of the common people. At a given signal the two processions began their march, each following the course prescribed. As they came to a stand in front of the temple, the whole body of singers broke out in song, praising the name of the Lord. Meanwhile a portion of the priests descended from the wall to the area of the temple, and there, in the great court, in the sight of all their brethren, offered sacrifice on the altar of burnt offering on behalf of the nation. The dedication of the wall would have been incomplete without such a practical ex-

pression of gratitude to God, and an offering in expiation for the sins and shortcomings of the people. (Ch. 12: 27-43.)

It is not entirely clear as to the order of events which succeeded the dedication of the walls. Nor is it necessary in our study of Nehemiah, interesting and instructive as it might be, to follow them out in detail. The characteristics of this famous leader, his motives and spirit, are sufficiently illustrated in the narrative already given. In all that followed, he was the same devout, resourceful, energetic, enthusiastic person. In the religious awakening which occurred soon after the dedication, Ezra and Nehemiah both had a part, and the entire population was aroused. Later, upon Nehemiah's return to Jerusalem after an absence at the East for a season, during which time serious abuses had developed, he instituted, with his accustomed vigor, practical reforms of a civil, religious and social nature. (Ch. 13.)

It will be instructive and helpful to inquire into the spirit and motives of this energetic man, so noted for bringing things to pass, and to learn, if possible, the secret of his uniform success in whatever he undertook. First of all he was a man of prayer. Although his character included in it all those qualities which are everywhere recognized as strong and commanding, and although he was enterprising, public spirited, enthusiastic, he was withal a thoroughly devout man. This was one of his most prominent characteristics. Everything he undertook was with a sense of his dependence upon God. He felt that upon every duty to which, in the providence of God, he was called, he might rightfully ask the divine bless-

ing. If his prayers were not at once answered, he persevered in them nevertheless. There was little to encourage him, for instance, when he first began to pray with reference to going to the assistance of his brethren at Jerusalem, but the conviction grew upon him that he was called of God to rebuild the walls of that city, and this conviction led to that persistence in prayer which finally brought the desired answer. Human agencies were not neglected, but the reliance after all for success was upon God. This phase of Nehemiah's character,—his manly piety and his persistent prayerfulness—furnishes a practical lesson for all.

We may notice, further, Nehemiah's courage and perseverance in the presence of the most obstinate difficulties. When he had satisfied himself that his purpose was a right one, he marshalled all his energies to the task in hand, expected God's blessing, and persevered in his work until success crowned his endeavors. It was in thus linking his plans with those of the Almighty, and then going forward with the assured conviction of divine assistance in carrying them out, that we find the real secret of his uniform success. Morally and physically he was a man of rare courage. If confident that he was in the right, he disregarded hindrances and consequences. The bitter opposition which he encountered in his reforms made no difference. He went forward in the execution of his plans just the same. No less marked was his physical bravery. In his position there was no call to expose himself to personal peril, yet as leader of the people, he felt that his place was at the front, and there he was always found. He did not ask others to expose themselves to dangers which he was not willing

to share. Obstacles and perils simply led him to gird himself all the more with divine strength, and to work on all the more energetically.

Then again, he was a genuine patriot. There was no selfishness about him. There is nothing to indicate that he had any other thought or aim in what he did than the welfare of his countrymen, their city and their nation. He seemed to have no thought of personal glory, of which too many men never lose sight. He was intent upon the all-absorbing purpose of rebuilding the walls of the holy city and of re-establishing the national life of the people. He asked his countrymen to bear no burdens which he was not himself willing to share. In Nehemiah one is reminded of Garibaldi's unselfish devotion to his country and its freedom. Even when cast into prison, the Italian patriot sent this message to his comrades: "If fifty Garibaldis are thrown into prison, let Rome be free." He cared nothing for his own comfort so long as the cause of freedom in Italy was advanced. It is refreshing in these times of political selfishness and corruption, to read of and to come in contact with men of whom Nehemiah is a conspicuous example,—from whose life all taint of self-seeking seems to have been eliminated, and who give evidence of a genuine devotion to the interests of their country and its institutions.

A final lesson may be gathered from the personal qualities,—the earnestness, the energy, and the enthusiasm of Nehemiah. Considering how most men love their ease, how prone the Oriental is, above all others, to be sluggish and apathetic, and remembering that Nehemiah was brought up amidst luxurious surroundings, it is not a

little surprising that he should have shown himself such a notable example of the incarnation of patriotic qualities. Never was one more earnest, zealous, enthusiastic. The influence of his inspiring example was contagious. It was this spirit on his part which carried conviction with the people, which awakened their courage and hope, which prompted them at once to respond to his appeal, "Let us rise up and build." Whenever a man is thoroughly in earnest and full of enthusiasm in a worthy enterprise, he does not lack followers. Others are inspired by it, are led to imitate his example, and to join him in his efforts. Sometimes, when there is zeal without knowledge or wisdom, the consequences may be disastrous, but when one's soul is on fire with zeal for a worthy object, and one proceeds wisely, enthusiasm becomes a mighty agency for good. Such enthusiasm is not ephemeral, spasmodic, it grows deeper and stronger, and may well be cultivated. An all-absorbing enthusiasm like this can hardly fail to be one's security against seductive influences. To temptations which arise, or to any solicitation to listen to evil counsels which may be presented, one can say, as did Nehemiah, "I am doing a great work so that I cannot come down." Half the temptations and spiritual difficulties of men grow out of the fact that they are so little absorbed in the things of the kingdom.

Through the story we have studied we gain some insight into the character and spirit of Nehemiah. He was transparent, clear-headed, resourceful, courageous, patriotic, enthusiastic, yet withal a man of deep and earnest piety, consciously dependent upon God for success in everything which he undertook. All that he did

sprang from a noble, unselfish desire to render service to his fellow men, and to promote the interests of righteousness and truth. He is one of the notable characters of the Old Testament, and his example we may well emulate. More Nehemiahs is the pressing need in church and state today.

# V.

# Study of Sermons and Addresses in the Bible.

# FOREWORD.

Many of the sermons and addresses of the Bible,—of the prophets of the Old Testament, and of Christ and the apostles in the New,—have come down to us entire or in quite full outline. It affords an interesting study to learn the situation in a particular case, the circumstances calling out the address, to form a picture in the mind of the occasion, the speaker, the audience, then to make an analysis or paraphrase of the discourse itself. Not only is such a study interesting and instructive in itself, it would, in many instances, be seen how pertinent to the situation, how grand and inspiring these old addresses were, while in connection with their underlying truths, important practical lessons, as appropriate and as much needed today as of old, would be developed. The number of such addresses in the Bible is much greater than might at first be supposed. The prophetic books are mostly made up of addresses or sermons, are collections of them. In the Gospels—in Matthew in particular—a number of Christ's discourses, beginning with the Sermon on the Mount, are reported. Several addresses by Peter, including the notable one at Pentecost, are given in the earlier part of the book of Acts; Stephen's address also, before the council (ch. 7); and later a number of Paul's addresses, including the one beginning "Ye men of Athens" (ch. 17); his tender and touching farewell to the Ephesian elders (ch. 20:18 and ff.): and his defence, with its felicitous introduction, before Festus and Agrippa (ch. 26). In the Old Testament there is the manly address of Judah before Joseph, pleading for the release of Benjamin (Gen. 44); various addresses by Moses, as recorded in Deuteronomy; farewell addresses by Joshua (Josh. 23, 24); with others scattered here and there, many of them grand in the extreme. They present a most interesting and inviting field of study, and it is recommended to the student to select such of these addresses as specially appeal to him, for his own investigation.

In the discourses selected for illustrative examples, the study of which will be suggestive as to methods to be employed with other discourses of the Bible, the Scripture itself and the context should be so read and studied, and obscure points looked up, that at length the entire scene will be made to stand out before the imagination, and the significance of the discourse itself in its relation to the time and the occasion when it was delivered, be perfectly understood. The first example, with some fullness of detail, is one of the addresses of Isaiah, the most conspicuous of the prophetic writers. An understanding of the situation at that time will throw light upon this particular address not only, but upon many others also, of his recorded discourses. Peter's sermon at Pentecost, judged by its results, was a marvelously effective one. Perhaps no sermon was ever more so. Paul's first recorded discourse, though far from being the first which he preached, gives some idea of the probable character of much of his preaching. In the changed circumstances of today, the subject matter of preaching would hardly be the same as in either of these instances, although the vital message, the call to repentance from sin and to faith in Christ, has by no means become obsolete, as it is no less needed now.

## SERMONS AND ADDRESSES IN THE BIBLE.

### I. A Manly Address.

One of the simplest, most easily comprehended in its connections, and most interesting of the many addresses recorded in the Bible, is found in the 44th chapter of Genesis. It is the address of Judah, pleading before Joseph for the release of Benjamin, the youngest son and joy of his father Jacob, whom Joseph, in testing his brethren, proposes to retain as his bond-servant in Egypt, while they return to Canaan. The real manliness and pathos of this address only become manifest as the story preceding and leading up to it is grasped in its details,—the sale of Joseph as a youth years before into Egypt by his jealous brothers; the vicissitudes of his experience there; his elevation at length to a position next in influence and power to the throne; and his operations in storing grain in view of the protracted famine which he had been forwarned was soon to come upon the nations; then the journey of Joseph's brethren to Egypt to buy food when the famine had become sore in Canaan; Joseph's recognition of his brethren but without making it known to them; his apparent severity of treatment towards them; his insistence that on their next visit to Egypt to purchase food they bring their youngest brother Benjamin with them; Jacob's reluctance to part with him, until Judah pledged himself to become personally responsible for his safety; and Joseph's proposal to re-

tain him in Egypt as his bond-servant. It is in this connection that Judah delivers the address (Gen. 44: 18-34) in which he seeks to make good his pledge to his aged father, offering himself to remain as a bond-servant if only Benjamin may be released, and his father's gray hairs be not brought down in sorrow to the grave.

By this noble address, which may be regarded as the culminating point of the story of Joseph and his brethren, Joseph was convinced that they had come to a better spirit than of old, and makes himself known to them in an address which is equally touching. The outcome of all is that the brethren, their families and flocks, together with Jacob, take up their abode in Egypt, which becomes the home of themselves and their descendants until the time of the exodus.

The opening address of Amos, the prophet from Tekoa, before the assembled visitors at Bethel,—the southern center of worship appointed for the northern kingdom,—is an exceedingly skillful and effective one. It is found in the first and second chapters of the book which bears the prophet's name. Studied in the light of the situation and the circumstances which called it out, this address will be found to be one of special interest. As this is considered somewhat at length in the chapter on "Studying the Bible by Books", the reader is referred to the analysis of it there given. The study will be greatly facilitated by a map of Palestine which indicates the northern and southern kingdoms, giving also the surrounding nations or tribes.

We will now take up two or three addresses and sermons of the Bible more in detail, beginning with

## II. A Prophet's Discourse.

Beyond question Isaiah was the greatest of the Old Testament prophets. He was an orator also, and a poet of the highest rank. In his writings we have one of the grandest monuments of inspired thought. He is more quoted by Christ and the apostles than all the rest of the prophets together. His public life, beginning with his call about 737 B. C., covered nearly half a century, a stormy and eventful period in Jewish history. His life and influence told powerfully upon his own times.

Of the personal life of Isaiah we know very little. The circumstances connected with his call to the prophetic office (Is. 6) were very impressive. Although it was foreshadowed to him that he would encounter many difficulties from the indifference of the people and their hardness of heart, he was never-the-less assured that his mission would by no means be a fruitless one. Though many should fall away, there would always remain a faithful remnant of the people. While his mind was exercised primarily with reference to the condition and needs of his own land, he sometimes turned his thought to the surrounding nations, with whose internal condition he shows remarkable familiarity. Occasionally his prophetic vision penetrated the distant future and centered especially upon the person of the Messiah who was to appear in the fullness of time.

The book of Isaiah seems to be a miscellaneous col-

lection of the prophet's writings, arranged without reference to chronological order. In many cases these are manifestly extracts or condensations of sermons or addresses which were delivered from time to time during his public life. This may help to explain the nature of the book and its lack of chronological arrangement.

In order to an intelligent understanding of Isaiah's utterances, it is necessary to know something about the times which called them forth. Much may be learned from his own book, together with that of his contemporary Micah, as well as from the historic books of Kings and Chronicles. In addition to these sources of information, and as confirming and expanding the Biblical record, numerous inscriptions upon Assyrian monuments relative to this very period and describing the same events, have been deciphered within the past half century. These inscriptions have given us a clear insight into the movements of the Assyrian kings in their relation to the fortunes of Judah and Israel. Light has been thrown upon the Biblical chronology, additional details have been furnished, and an enlarged understanding of Semitic life in general has been acquired. In the conditions then existing, we have the background of the picture which is presented by Isaiah's collected writings.

It was a period of great degeneracy. There were flagrant irregularities of internal administration. The body politic was utterly unsound. Bribery, corruption and injustice prevailed. The masses were ground down by oppression; the cry of distress filled the land. Luxury and pride abounded. Public virtue was decaying and morality was lax in every quarter. All classes alike seemed to be affected. Drunkenness was a national vice,

and nobles abandoned themselves to shameful debauchery. An extraordinary greed for riches seized upon the nation and never after left it. Idolatry was not uncommon in the northern kingdom, while the tendency to it was strong in the southern. The temple service was maintained and the forms of religion prevailed, but religious profession was hollow, genuine devotion rare. A high mission had been entrusted to the nation, but it had not been true to its responsibility. Nothing but severe discipline would restore it to its former and ideal character. It must be purged, be made to pass through the furnace, and then a remnant, at least, would come forth refined and purified.

This was the situation when Isaiah stepped forth upon the stage of action. This is the historical background of his earlier prophecies. He saw clearly that unless the prevailing wickedness was checked, the doom of the nation was certain. The fate of the northern kingdom was an object lesson and a warning for the people of Judah. Destruction had come upon it in consequence of its sins. Isaiah had been a witness of it, had seen its armies defeated, its capital stormed and taken, the people carried into captivity. A similar fate threatened his own nation if it continued its present course, for Assyria, the rising power on the eastern horizon, steadily pressing westward, was manifestly destined to play a conspicuous part in western affairs, and might be employed in the providence of God to chastise Judah for her forgetfulness of Him. Only a revival of national and individual righteousness could avert the threatened doom.

So the prophet threw himself with all his soul into the work of arousing the nation to a sense of its condi-

tion and its peril, of awakening its slumbering conscience, and of effecting needed social and political reformation. He pointed out the utter worthlessness and uselessness of their elaborate ceremonial and their stately ritual, so long as the life of the people remained selfish and corrupt. The theme of his preaching was repentance, without which the sure judgments of God must fall upon the guilty. His denunciations of existing evils were sometimes terrible, yet he was tender and considerate also, and rarely failed to hold out the hope of forgiveness when penitence was sincere.

As affording a good illustration of the method and spirit of Isaiah's preaching, we may notice the address or synopsis of an address, which is presented in the first chapter of his book. (Is. 1.) Though probably delivered considerably after the beginning of Isaiah's public career, it forms a suitable introduction to the collection. It is one of the most representative of his discourses, and sounds the keynote of them all. It sets forth clearly the points which were at issue between Jehovah and his people during the prophet's time. It has been called, and very fittingly, The Great Arraignment. By reason of the long period of material prosperity preceding, the nation had become blinded to its real condition. In this address the prophet draws the veil aside, and this condition is disclosed in all its baldness. Like unnatural children the people had disowned their father, had neglected their duties, had frustrated God's purposes in their existence as a nation. The body politic had become unsound, diseased, hence less able than it would otherwise have been to resist attack from outside. Only by a severe discipline would the nation be restored to its right relations with

Jehovah. Unworthy members of it would perish, yet a faithful remnant would survive.

We may listen to the prophet's own words, in substance. We see him taking his position in a court of the temple or some other public place, the crowd collecting around him. We can almost hear his voice as he declares God's estimate of their character and the approaching chastisements which they are to suffer. Observe the language he employs; graphic, full of imagery, yet clear, searching, unmistakable in its plainness. Often must his hearers have winced under it, although its truthfulness could not be denied.

"Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for Jehovah hath spoken: I have nourished and brought up children and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people do not consider (i. e. they do not think). Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, children that deal corruptly: they have forsaken Jehovah, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are estranged and gone backward. Why should you be stricken any more by thus continuing your apostasy? The whole head is sick and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even to the head, no part of the body politic is sound. It is all wounds and bruises and festering sores, which have neither been cleansed nor bound up nor mollified with oil.

"Your country is desolate, your cities are burned, your land is ravaged by foreign troops before your very eyes, it is left a desert waste. And Jerusalem, the daughter of Zion, though yet spared, is left as isolated as a watcher's

booth in a large vineyard or cucumber field, or as a city closely besieged. Had not Jehovah spared a small remnant of us, we should have been swept away as utterly as Sodom, we should have perished from the earth like Gomorrah."

Then the prophet goes on to show that mere ritualistic services in the temple, or sacrifices upon the altar, though regularly and scrupulously maintained, by no means exhaust the religious obligation of the people. Nothing material or external can supply the place of sincerity of heart and integrity of purpose.

"What unto me is the multitude of your sacrifices? saith Jehovah. I am satiated with the burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts. I have no pleasure in the blood of bullocks, or lambs, or he goats. Your coming into my presence is a mere form, your perfunctory performance of religious duties is a desecration. Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination to me. As to your new moon services and sabbaths, your appointed feasts and varied religious observances, I cannot endure them; my soul hateth them; I am weary of bearing them.

"Wash you, make yourselves clean. Put away the evil of your doing. Even your prayers are offensive and useless; I will not hear them, for your uplifted hands betray stains of blood. Cleanse yourselves. Put away the evil of your deeds from before mine eyes. Cease to do evil. Learn to do well. Seek that which is right. Restrain the oppressor; do justice to the fatherless; plead the cause of the widow. Then Jehovah can show you favor."

Grievous though the sins of the people have been,

there is still opportunity for repentance. Jehovah is willing to forgive all who will obey him. This is now the prophet's thought and he pleads with the people accordingly.

"Come now, let us reason together, saith Jehovah (or bring our reasoning to a close and hear the conclusion of the whole matter). Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword. The mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it, and his word cannot be broken."

But the prophet foresees that this offer of pardon, kindly and tenderly made as it is, will not be generally accepted—only a few will listen to and regard it, and judgment is accordingly pronounced. Nothing but a severe discipline will restore the nation to its former and ideal character. Only by the smelting fires of God's judgments, by which Jerusalem's real adversaries—her own wicked people—shall be purged away and destroyed, and the survival of a worthy residue who have her real interests at heart, will Zion be saved, and become, as of old, a stronghold of righteousness. A loyal remnant shall be her salvation.

From this representative discourse, we may gain some idea of the character of Isaiah's preaching, its moral earnestness, its lofty grandeur, its grip upon the conscience, its spiritual power. Such were the moral and spiritual evils of the time, that unless the nation repented and a radical reform took place. retribution, sooner or

later, would certainly come. This Isaiah saw clearly, and this it was which moved him to cry aloud, and with fervid eloquence, to call upon the people to repent. In his earnestness he foreshadowed John the Baptist:—"Unless ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

Isaiah does not invoke divine wrath, as David did, upon the enemies of God, but he points out that that wrath, from the nature of things, overtakes the sinner. The law which is written upon man's constitution must be obeyed, or penalty will follow. This is one of the doctrines which stands out with great vividness in the prophet's preaching. This is not an arbitrary infliction on God's part, it springs from the nature of things which he has ordained. This is one of the fundamental principles of God's moral government. "These principles," says a writer in commenting upon this subject, "center around the great truth that national wickedness will certainly be followed by national calamities, which is also one of the most impressive truths which all history teaches. In conformity with this law or principle we read the fate of Nineveh, of Babylon, of Tyre, of Jerusalem, of Carthage, of Antioch, of Corinth, of Athens, of Rome." And the same fate is hastening in the case of corrupt nations today. There is nothing which can save modern cities and countries, however magnificent their civilization, from a like visitation of almighty power, if they continue in the iniquity which now prevails within them and which all the world perceives. "It must have seemed as absurd to the hearers or readers of Isaiah's predictions nearly three thousand years ago to believe that Babylon and Tyre would fall, as it would to the people of our day should one predict the future ruin of Paris or London or New

York or Chicago, on account of the vices prevalent in them. God governs the world by the same principles now that he did then, a fact which is often ignored even by profound and religious inquirers. It is the impressive lesson of history, constantly verified, that righteousness exalteth a nation, and that iniquity brings it low."

Hence it follows that he is no patriot, whatever he professes, but a veritable traitor and enemy rather, whose influence is corrupting to his nation, his city, his community; who is not upright in his own life; or, to promote party or selfish advantage, does not scruple to connive, at least to wink at, corruption, fraud, and bribery, or to help elect bad men to office. On the other hand, a lofty and practical patriotism seeks to purify the civic life of city or state, and rising above mere party, strives to secure the election of only honest, trustworthy, competent men, to fill official positions. If Isaiah were in some influential modern pulpit, he would undoubtedly have something to say about municipal affairs.

But whatever may be the severity of Isaiah's language in the addresses or sermons which so largely make up his writings, and however awful the judgments of God which he pronounces upon the nation and the people in view of their sins, it is not to be overlooked that he seldom closes one of these dreadful announcements without holding out the hope of forgiveness in case of repentance, with the peace and comfort which follow it. In his view, the mercy of the Lord is more impressive than his judgments, and his soul often overflows with tender sentiments and loving exhortations.

### III. A Powerful Sermon.

The disciples had been meeting together with one accord from day to day, after Christ's departure, in the upper room at Jerusalem, awaiting the promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit. This was to be the formal inauguration of the New Dispensation, under which we now live. This would be their final preparation for publishing the glad tidings throughout the world. At length, on the morning of Pentecost, the spiritual baptism came. It was accompanied by strange outward manifestations. When this was noised abroad a great crowd soon collected. Then Peter, endued with power from on high, and with a courage and boldness in striking contrast with the timidity and cowardice which he had exhibited a few weeks before, stood forth and preached to the people Christ and his salvation. His words produced profound conviction of sin, awakened anxious inquiry as to what must be done to be saved, and led to the conversion of three thousand souls. (Acts 2: 1-41.)

We may picture the condition of affairs in the city at that time, and the stirring events of that memorable morning. Jerusalem was the political and religious capital of the nation. From its sacred associations it was dear to the Jews the world over. It was the city of David, of Solomon, of prophets, priests and kings. Here the temple was located, and here there had been frequent manifestations of God's presence and power. Now the city was filled with a multitude of strangers. From all over the land they had gathered, from distant countries too—Europe, Asia, and Africa, wherever the Jews had found a home. They had made long pilgrimages hither,

coming by thousands, that they might be present at the festal occasion of Pentecost, one of the three great annual festivals of the Jewish people, their thanksgiving at the end of the harvest.

On this particular morning, all is life and stir in the Jewish capital. It is quite early, before nine o'clock. The people are preparing for the coming festivities. The streets are thronged with visitors. All are eager and expectant in view of anticipated scenes—all, perhaps, save the little band of disciples and other believers who are keeping their morning devotions in a place somewhat retired. Here they are imploring, with united desire, as they had done for several days before, the promised spiritual baptism. They had been directed to tarry in the city until this promise of the Father should be verified. Just how this pledge was to be fulfilled they could not know, but of the certainty of its fulfillment there was not the shadow of a doubt.

Suddenly, on the morning of Pentecost—and what more fitting occasion for so important an event could have been selected than one in which representatives from so many lands would know of it and herald the tidings the world over—suddenly, the sacred historian declares, there is the sound as of a rushing mighty wind in the room where the disciples are praying. The place is filled by it. There are supernatural accompaniments; cloven tongues as of fire rest upon their heads. They begin to speak of the things of God and to glorify his name in languages or dialects of which they were ignorant before. It is a strange, a startling spectacle. Their minds are quickened to an unwonted degree. A new spiritual insight is imparted. Old and familiar Scripture

passages now have a new and richer significance than before. Christ is seen to be the central figure in the Old Testament dispensation. Everything points to Him more clearly than ever. They recognize His divine character, perceive the significance of His mission, His sufferings and death, and how completely this accords with the inspired prediction. The teachings of Jesus, many of them forgotten, or which, in the dullness of their apprehension seemed almost meaningless at the time they were given, impress them with wonderful force. Their minds are illumined; cloudy, misty, uncertain views are cleared away. Their souls are aglow with a holy enthusiasm, on fire with love and personal devotion to their ascended Lord. Thus at length they are prepared for their mission—to endure hardship, to brave danger, to meet persecution, even death itself, without wavering in their faith.

Reports of the wonderful things which took place at this apostolic prayer meeting are soon noised abroad. Word goes from mouth to mouth through the crowded city. From all quarters the people flock together to the place until thousands have gathered, all curious to see and understand. They find the report to be true. Each one of these strangers hears his own native tongue freely spoken. No wonder they are surprised, or that the astonished inquiry goes round, "What meaneth this?" what is the significance of this unusual demonstration? Some, skeptically inclined, sneeringly attribute it to the effects of new wine—just as now whenever there is a marked outpouring of the Spirit and Christian people are aroused to an unwonted activity, there are not wanting those who

attribute such effects to "excitement," or to some other influence than the power of God.

Then it was that the disciples went forward, and Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit and speaking for the rest, addressed the mighty throng. It was his first sermon. It was bold and powerful. Considering the circumstances, the occasion, the audience, his previous obscurity, it was startlingly so. Only an outline of it is preserved, yet in that outline we have enough to indicate its character and spirit. Christ, now risen and glorified, was its central thought. Everything gathered about that name. The fearful sin of the Jews in rejecting Him was clearly pointed out. Their only hope of mercy lay in instant repentance, and in faith in Him whom they had rejected. We may amplify the thought of the sermon.

Peter began by sweeping away the coarse charge of drunkenness which had been brought against the disciples to account for the phenomena of the morning. He then explained the event which had called the people together. It was in accordance with the prediction made by the prophet Joel hundreds of years before, a prophecy which they had often heard read in their synagogues, and with which they were familiar. (Joel 2:28 and ff.) It was that in the last days of the Old Dispensation, God would pour out his Spirit upon all flesh, old and young, sons and daughters, upon all classes and conditions of men, wherever there were hearts prepared to receive it. This which they had seen was but the first installment of a promise which was to be verified in growing measure in succeeding generations until the end of time.

Peter next proceeded to connect Jesus with this event,

first sketching His earthly career, affirming His divinity, and supporting his assertions with proof which none could gainsay or resist. He had appeared among the Jews, a man manifestly approved of God as shown by the mighty works which He had wrought. He had given abundant evidence of his divine mission, abundant proof of his divine character, but the minds of those to whom He came had been so dazzled and blinded by thoughts of earthly royalty, pomp, and splendor, in the Messiah of their imaginations, that they were unwilling even to consider the claims of one coming in humble garb, or to recognize in a man of such lowly origin the glorious One so long foretold.

Having substantiated the claim of Christ's divine character and Messiahship, having shown the perfect fulfillment in him of the long line of Messianic predictions, Peter next boldly charged those who were listening to him with the fearful crime of his rejection and murder. Blinded by prejudice and passion, hardened by pride, angered by His lofty claims, stung to madness by His sharp rebukes of their evil deeds and still more evil hearts, they had resisted His words, had insulted and persecuted Him, had frequently sought to lay violent hands upon Him, and finally, in their frenzied hate, which could only be satisfied with blood, had put Him to death. "Him," says Peter, "ye by the hand of lawless men did crucify and slay." Directly or indirectly all who heard these words were involved in the crime of crucifying the Lord. Some of them, perhaps, had formed a part of the mad rabble which had clamored for his execution, while others had silently assented to it.

We may imagine the amazement which such a charge

would produce in that throng of hearers. If it were really true, as they were beginning to perceive, that the one who had been put to death was the veritable Son of God; that in Him a perfect standard of righteousness had been set up among them, even that of God himself, and that they, by their attitude toward it, had thereby disclosed their own real characters; if Jesus of Nazareth were indeed their own long expected Messiah and they had been so sin-blinded as not to recognize Him when He came; if it were true that in rejecting Him they had rejected God himself and were involved in the guilt of His murder; what possible hope was left to them as individuals or as a nation of averting the divine vengeance?

But this was not all. Although Peter's telling words have been producing profound conviction in the minds of his listeners, he has something further to present and he does not hesitate to present it. He makes the startling statement, which was generally known, probably, if at all up to that time, only as an idle rumor, that this same crucified One had risen from the dead, a still further and crowning proof of His divinity. He was now actually alive—God had raised Him up. They, the disciples, had seen Him, had touched Him, had talked with Him, had eaten with Him. They stood there as witnesses of His resurrection. After appearing to them from time to time for a number of weeks, this risen One had been received up into heaven. As His disciples, they had been present at His ascension, when a cloud received Him out of their sight. Now He was seated at the right hand of God on the throne of the universe, reigning in glory, as He would continue to do forever. These were facts

which could not be set aside, facts which were in accordance with their own Scriptures which clearly foreshadowed them, which they might and would have recognized had it not been for their culpable blindness and hardness of heart.

A final proof and seal of His divinity and of His enthronement, was the manifestation of the Spirit just now witnessed. He had promised to send the Spirit in power upon His disciples. They were to tarry in Jerusalem until the promise was fulfilled. The Spirit had come upon them as their ascending Lord had promised. "Therefore," says Peter, "let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified." God had exalted Him to the highest, had committed all authority and power in heaven and earth into His hands.

Thus concluded Peter's unanswerable argument. Out of their own Scriptures, which all Jews recognized as of supreme authority, he had demonstrated that the One they had rejected was the Messiah, long foretold, the Son of the living God. Peter had proved His divine character by His sinless life and mighty works; by His resurrection and ascension of which they, the disciples, were witnesses; by the descent of the Spirit in power upon them, whose operations the people had beheld. This divine person, perfect in holiness, this visible representative of the great God himself, they had not only thrust from them, but in their madness and rage had put Him to death. In rejecting Him they had in reality rejected God whose ambassador, yea whose Son He was. Their spirit and their acts had shown that if they had the power to do so, they had the heart to murder the very

God who made them, who ruled over them, whose they were, and whom they ought to obey and serve. They had shown that the very essence of all wickedness and sin was in them. Their character had been brought to light. They had been tested and found wanting.

The multitudes had listened, we can well imagine, with breathless attention to Peter's fearfully scathing words. It began to dawn upon them what they had done, and what was worse, what they were. Peter had held the mirror before their very souls. They were convicted of their sins. Their hearts condemned them. They realized their awful guilt. They saw that in rejecting Christ they had rejected their own Deliverer, their only hope, God himself. The effect was overwhelming. They were "pricked" in their hearts and cried out, "Brethren, what shall we do?"

Then Peter preached to them the blessed gospel of pardon and reconciliation through the work of Him whom they had crucified. So great had been God's love for men that notwithstanding all they had done and had been, He would, for the sake of His Son, forgive and save them. "Repent ye," he says, "and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." This is the condition of acceptance with God. You are to turn away from your sins. You are to believe in and be loyal to the one you have rejected and slain, but who is now living and reigning above. Henceforth you are to be obedient to Him as your Lord and Master, for whose sake God will pardon your transgressions. You are to make yourselves publicly His disciples by receiving the rite of baptism, the outward sign which He has ap-

pointed of a new purpose in life. Thus you will receive this same gift of the indwelling, inspiring Spirit. Thus will joy and peace fill your souls.

The result of that morning's appeal, attended by the Spirit's convicting and converting power, was that three thousand persons accepted Christ as their Savior. These converts continued steadfast, and proved by their love, their liberality, their fidelity, that they had been born again. Thus a mighty impulse was given to the new movement at the very outset—an impulse which could not fail to be felt even in all the nations round about from which the Jews had made pilgrimages to be present at this annual Pentecostal festival, and be a preparation for the labors of the apostles later on, as in obedience to Christ's directions, they went forth to "make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I command you."

## IV. Paul's First Recorded Sermon.

Paul first comes into prominence as a preacher at Antioch. For a number of years succeeding his conversion, he had been declaring the glad tidings to men as the way opened, chiefly, however, in the regions round about his native Tarsus. All this time he had been gaining a valuable experience in the work to which he had devoted his life, and was being providentially prepared for more important responsibilities to follow. Now he is called to assist Barnabas in the large and rapidly developing work at Antioch. Here his ability and effectiveness as a preacher are at once apparent. Through the

joint labors of these two men, the Antioch church soon became strong and influential. (Acts 11:25, 26.)

One of the manifestations of the religious zeal with which the church was pervaded, was a proposal which was finally, after much discussion and prayer, adopted, to send forth a mission to the heathen of the countries round about. Who should lead such a movement as this? The simple record is, that "as they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them way." (Ch. 13:2, 3.) Thus we have the formal inauguration of the foreign missionary service, in which Paul soon became the acknowledged leader, and which occupied the remainder of his days. It was on this first missionary tour that he preached a sermon of which the substance is preserved in the thirteenth chapter of the book of Acts, the first of his recorded discourses.

The plan of this first missionary tour was to go through the island of Cyprus, then make a circuit of important cities in the interior of what is now called Asia Minor. This plan was carried out. After preaching at various points in Cyprus, the missionaries sailed northward, landed at Perga in Pamphilia, then struck at once into the interior of the country, preaching in all the cities through which they passed. The way led over wild mountain passes, across foaming torrents, and through regions which were infested with brigands. On this journey Paul may have been exposed to those "perils of rivers" and "perils of robbers" to which he refers in one of his epistles. At length he and Barnabas came to an-

other Antioch, called Antioch in Pisidia by way of distinction from that Antioch in Syria from which they had started. It was located about one hundred miles from the coast, was built on the southern slope of a mountain ridge, and from the ruins which remain, we infer that it was a city of considerable importance. Its population was made up of a mixture of native Pisidians, Greek settlers, and Roman colonists. There were numerous Jews also, who had a synagogue of their own in which they met for worship.

Into this city with its motley population the missionaries came, and following the custom they everywhere adopted, they addressed themselves first of all to their countrymen. Very likely they held interviews with some of them during the week, explaining the nature of their mission and of their message, which, as the fact of their presence was noised about, would tend to awaken popular curiosity to listen to them on the following sabbath. (Ch. 13:4-14.)

The audience on that occasion was composed of both Jews and Gentiles. The latter, made up indiscriminately of those who were not Jews, were called religious proselytes. Under this designation such Gentiles were included as, dissatisfied with the heathen religions, so called, of the times, had gone so far as to accept the one God of the Jews. They were not formally connected with the Jewish church, and did not submit themselves entirely to the Jewish ritual, yet they were glad, notwithstanding, to join in a general way in the Jewish worship. The Jews on the other hand, while recognizing that there was still a wide gulf between themselves and the Gentiles, welcomed the latter to their services. There were these

two elements in Paul's audience on that first sabbath in the Pisidian Antioch, and this fact led him so to introduce his address as to render it conciliatory to those who heard it, yet without yielding anything which was vital.

We may imagine the scene. The synagogue, if like those which are still seen at the East, was a low, square structure; the audience room was unadorned, and was furnished with its desk for the reader, and chief seats for the elders. The women were separated from the men and partially concealed. The clerk of the synagogue takes the roll containing the Scripture lesson for the day from its receptacle, and hands it to the reader. After the reading, in accordance with prevailing custom, an invitation is extended to the visitors: "Brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on." (Ch. 13:15.) Then Paul stands in his place, and beckoning with his hand (v. 16 and ff.)—a characteristic gesture which is frequently referred to—begins his discourse with a courteous reference to each of the two elements in his congregation. "Men of Israel"—i. e., Jews—"and ye that fear God"—i. e., proselytes of the Gentiles, "hearken." Then he strikes at once into what may be termed the historical section of his discourse. He refers to the providence of God which had been so manifest in Jewish history, and of which they may have been reminded in the Scripture lesson to which they had just listened. God had chosen the Hebrew people, had nurtured them in Egypt, had delivered them from their bondage, had led them through the wilderness, had given the land of Canaan into their possession, had provided them with Judges for over four hundred years, until the prophet Samuel, in response to their desire, had given

them a king, Saul by name, who ruled them forty years. Then David was raised up for them, a man after God's own heart, from whose seed—and this was the central truth of the discourse, and which it was Paul's mission everywhere to declare—God had, according to his promise, raised unto Israel a Savior, Jesus, in a hearty acceptance of whom lay their security.

Following this declaration, and as if to answer the question which must at once have risen in the minds of his hearers as to what evidence was to be adduced in support of so momentous a proposition, Paul next proceeds to furnish such proof as would appeal to Jewish minds of the reality of Jesus' Messiahship. This brings us to what may be termed the second or argumentative section of the discourse.

One proof was to be derived from the testimony of John the Baptist, who had borne direct witness to Him, had discovered Him as it were, and to prepare for whose coming he had called upon men everywhere to repent. He had considered his own mission to have been accomplished after he had pointed Jesus out to the people. "He must increase, but I must decrease." Another proof was found in the fact of the rejection and crucifixion of Jesus by the Jews at Jerusalem. In doing this they had been unwittingly fulfilling prophecies which had been given long before concerning Jesus, and which clearly intimated that when the Messiah came into the world he would be rejected and crucified by the people He came to save.

But the crowning proof which Paul offered in support of the proposition that Jesus was the Savior and hope of the world, was the fact that God had raised

Him from the dead. To this fact the entire apostolic company and many others were witnesses. Then, lest there might be hesitancy about receiving this testimony, he proceeded to show that this also was in accordance with those prophecies which had long been the confidence of the nation. The resurrection of Jesus was the fulfillment of these prophecies. Nor was it a mere temporary resurrection, of which there had been instances in Jewish history. Jesus rose once for all, no more to return to the grave. Death had no further power over Him, and in Him were fulfilled those prophecies which declared that he should be the king of a spiritual, enduring, and universal dominion. Thus by the testimony of John the Baptist, their acknowledged prophet; by the fulfillment of prophecy in the rejection and crucifixion of Jesus by the Jews; and by his resurrection from the dead in fulfillment of recognized Messianic predictions, Paul proved that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the Christ, the long-expected One, the divine Savior of the world.

"Be it known unto you therefore, brethren," he continues—and this logically follows the establishment of the fact of His resurrection and Messiahship—"that through this man is proclaimed unto you remission of sins."

If there was any one thing which the sincere Jew desired above another, it was the forgiveness of his sins and a sense of God's favor and love. The system of Moses had awakened in men a consciousness of their sinfulness and need, but that was as far as it could go. It had no remedy to suggest, no relief to offer. Now a Savior had come, one who had power to forgive sins,

and by faith in Him, all who would might experience the sought-for relief. In Him and Him alone was there remission. By turning from their sins in full purpose of heart, and yielding in loyal submission and devotion to Jesus Christ, this great boon was to be realized. Now that He had come, the mission of the Mosaic system was accomplished and was to pass away.

Thus in the doctrinal section of his discourse, Paul presents those views of the function of the Mosaic system and of the nature of the gospel or glad tidings of Jesus Christ, which are more fully elaborated and enforced in his epistles to the Galatians and to the Romans, and which Luther, centuries later, when the church had become corrupt and this truth had become obscured, emphasized afresh with mighty power and with far-reaching consequences. Indeed so long as human nature remains as it is, with its burden of sin and condemnation, the truth of forgiveness through faith in Jesus Christ, the world's Savior, will not become obsolete. The central gospel truth is justification by faith, forgiveness by turning from sin and trusting in Him who came to seek and save the lost. The philosophy or explanation of this atoning work of Jesus Christ, by which a way of salvation for sinful men was opened, and by which all these blessings are made available, may not always be understood—it is not necessary that it should be—but the fact of an atoning Savior, given to the world through God's compassionate love, and of remission of sins through Him, is the fact for which the world was then waiting, and still needs to receive.

Having set forth this fundamental principle of the

gospel, Paul concluded his discourse with a practical exhortation. Solemnly setting forth the spiritual danger men were in if this message of salvation were ignored—quoting still, as he seemed always wont to do, from their own Scriptures to enforce his words—"Beware therefore," he says, "lest that come upon you which is spoken in the prophets; Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish; for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, if one declare it unto you."

By presenting the true explanation of their own Scriptures, which had been missed by his hearers in the current exegesis of the times, and by setting forth the facts pertaining to Jesus' life, and work, and resurrection, Paul had sought to open to the minds of Jews and Gentiles alike, the new and mighty hopes of the glad tidings which Jesus had come into the world to announce.

The effect produced by the discourse was very striking. The people, especially the Gentiles, were thoroughly interested in the views which had been presented. These formed the theme of their conversation after the audience had been dismissed.

On the following sabbath—Paul having been invited by the Gentiles to continue the subject—there was a great gathering of the people. The matter had been noised abroad through the city during the week. The larger portion of the audience on this second sabbath was made up of Gentiles, whereupon the Jews present, who had begun to be suspicious, in a spirit of envy and opposition sought frequently to interrupt the speaker. This led the missionaries at length deliberately to turn from their unappreciative countrymen to the more responsive Gentiles,

and to devote their attention, during the remainder of their stay in the city, to them—for so, they said, "hath the Lord commanded us."

One or two practical thoughts are suggested in conclusion.

We have here an illustration of the different results which are produced in different minds by the earnest preaching of the gospel. Some in Paul's audience believed, and some believed not; some were open-minded, willing to consider the truth presented, ready to receive it into good and honest hearts, others were prejudiced against it, antagonistic from the beginning. The same gospel was thus a savor of life unto life to some, to others a savor of death unto death. So it always has been, so no doubt it will always continue to be. The same sermon often produces diametrically opposite effects, the result in each case depending upon the spirit in which one listens. The preacher's comfort is, if he has faithfully proclaimed the truth, that the responsibility for accepting or rejecting it has passed from himself to those who have heard him speak.

A second thought is that although nearly 2000 years have passed, the gospel which Paul then set forth, with its proffer of forgiveness upon a simple condition which was within the reach of all, holds good today. The world has not outgrown it, human nature has not developed beyond the need of it. There is the same deadly disease of sin in the human heart, and no other remedy than the effective one provided in Christ has ever been discovered. "There is none other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved." In no other is there

remission of sins for those who are burdened and condemned. The method of presenting the glad tidings has changed with the changed conditions of men—the method which Paul employed in addressing the Jews would appeal with far less force now than some other—but the gospel message itself has not changed and never will change. Men have long sought to discover some easier way of salvation, some way involving no humbling of self, no sacrifice, some way by which they can still retain their sins, but no one has ever succeeded in finding the object of his search. There is but one way, the way of the cross, the way of faith in Christ. And whenever any one, anywhere, whatever his station, however grievous his sin, fulfills the simple, radical condition of repentance and faith, he is accepted, his sins are forgiven, the favor of God rests upon him, he becomes an heir of glory.

"Through this man Jesus, whom God raised from the dead, there is proclaimed unto all men the remission of sins."

# VI

## Study of Bible Scenes and Incidents.

# FOREWORD.

If we turn to the scenes and incidents of the Bible, there seems to be no limit to them, either in number or variety, and every one is suggestive of valuable and practical lessons for the present time. This is true of those in the Old Testament. It is peculiarly true of those in the New. Were we to include the parables of Christ, which, though imaginary, are not improbable scenes, the spiritual lessons inculcated will be found to be of the profoundest and most helpful character.

As specimen studies, a striking scene from the Old Testament has been taken—Elijah's memorable contest with the priests of Baal on Mount Carmel; a remarkably rich and suggestive chapter from the New Testament, one of the most remarkable in the Bible in view of what it contains; and a realistic representation of the closing days of Christ's earthly life. This latter is based upon the closing chapters of the four Gospels, and helps to interpret and render them vivid.

After the student has fixed upon some incident, whether of the Old or New Testament, for special study, let him first of all acquaint himself, by a careful examination of the context and other sources of information available, with its local or historical settings. In the light of this, the incident itself may be studied to best advantage. In this, as in other methods of Bible study, it will be found to be of great value to write out the results of one's investigations.

## I. A MEMORABLE CONTEST.

The general name Carmel is applied to a bold mountain range or ridge in the northern part of Palestine, which is twelve to fifteen miles in length. It extends from the interior of the country northwest and terminates in a rugged promontory which projects into the Mediterranean. The highest point of the ridge is about 1500 feet above the sea level. If we take our stand upon this point, the view spread out in all directions is extensive and grand.

At the base on the north, or northeast side, is the river Kishon, which, in the rainy season, is considerable of a stream. It flows northwest and empties into the Mediterranean, although for a large part of the year its bed is dry. Eastward is the magnificent plain of Esdraelon. Mount Tabor with its oval crest rising from its northeast border. The mountains beyond the Jordan are plainly visible. Far to the northeast we catch a glimpse of the many peaks of Lebanon, Mount Hermon towering above them all, while to the southeast are the mountains of Samaria. Turning to the westward, the blue waters of the Mediterranean stretch away as far as the eye can reach. Here and there a white sail may be seen, adding to the beauty of the picture. To the right is the small bay of Acre, across which is a city of the same name. Some miles to the south—although not visible from where we are on Carmel—are the ruins of ancient Caesarea,

on which Herod lavished his wealth, where Paul was imprisoned, and where he delivered those unrivaled addresses before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa. Near the southeast extremity of this mountain ridge—which is the portion particularly called Carmel in Scripture—and a little below its summit, is a natural amphitheater which was once the scene of a memorable meeting. (1 Kings 18: 19 and ff.) Here, in a most signal manner, was decided the great question as to whether Baal or Jehovah was the true God of Israel, the prophet Elijah standing alone for the latter, a multitude of heathen priests for the former. The exact spot of the meeting has, it is believed, been identified. Thus in whatever direction we turn, there is something to interest us, or, from its historical associations, to stir the heart.

Three years before the meeting referred to, Elijah the Tishbite, a prophet from Gilead, clad in the rough garb of the desert, had suddenly presented himself at the court of Ahab, king of Israel, and delivered the startling message that, as a judgment upon the nation for its apostasy from the worship of Jehovah to that of Baal, and for which the king himself was largely responsible, no rain should fall for three years. "As Jehovah, the God of Israel, liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." (1 Kings 17: 1.) After delivering this message the prophet departed as abruptly as he came, seeking safety in hiding from the resentment of Ahab and of his more bitter queen.

The drought thus threatened was a punishment of apostasy which many in Israel, if not Ahab himself, would understand. In his ambitious and worldly policy, the king

had sought to enlarge the boundaries of Israel in all directions, to increase its wealth, to enhance its prestige among the nations. To this end he had, among other things, resorted to foreign matrimonial alliances, and to the introduction into Israel of foreign religions, of which Baal-worship was the most prominent. If he did not attempt altogether to crush out the worship of Jehovah, he at least reduced it to the level of various pagan systems—putting them all on a common footing—although he himself gave evidence of being specially favorable to the worship of Baal. It was owing to this course on Ahab's part and its disastrous effect upon the true worship throughout the land, that the historian declares that he "did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah above all that were before him," mentioning in particular that he took to wife Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians, who was a zealous devotee of Baal-worship, and that he himself "went and served Baal, and worshipped him." (1 Kings 16: 30-33.)

It was a great crisis in Israel. The prophet's word was verified. For three and a half years the heavens were shut up so that neither dew nor rain fell. (James 5: 17.) The fountains and streams dried up. The cattle were perishing with thirst, and famine confronted every household. There were suffering and solicitude everywhere. Such was the state of things when the word of the Lord came to Elijah: "Go, show thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth." (1 Kings 18: 1.) In the distress which prevailed, Ahab and his attendants were constrained at length to go forth in a desperate effort to search the land for water and herbage, that their horses and mules might be preserved alive.

(Ch. 18:2-6.) It was while he was out upon this errand that he met the prophet. "And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him. Is it thou, thou troubler of Israel?" With strange moral perverseness he held Elijah responsible for the mischiefs of the terrible drought for which he was himself largely responsible. Fearlessly and truthfully Elijah made reply: "I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of Jehovah, and thou hast followed the Baalim." Then, with wonderful boldness and as if master of the situation, Elijah proposes, almost commands, that the question at issue as between Baal and Jehovah be settled by a test upon mount Carmel, in which representatives of the people from all over the land, and all the priests of Baal, together with himself, should participate. Ahab raised no objection to the plan proposed. (Ch. 18:17-19.) The proposition made by Elijah was so manifestly fair that he could not well refuse it.

The summons had gone forth for a national gathering upon mount Carmel. (Ch. 18:20.) As the appointed day drew near, companies of the people from every quarter of the land might be seen making their way to the place selected, some on foot, some perchance riding on camels or donkeys, all interested in the events about to take place, although not knowing precisely what was to be their nature. On the morning itself of the eventful day, there stood upon the mountain terrace a vast multitude of men. Later the king appears, attended by members of his court, and takes the place of honor assigned him. Then the priests of Baal, arrayed in gor-

geous vestments, 450 in number, advance in stately procession. The multitude of spectators may have covered the entire mountain side.

Will Elijah now appear? will he dare to run the risk, single handed and alone, of a conflict with the priesthood and in the face of an unsympathetic popular sentiment? Shortly, he too appears, fresh from communion with God in some secluded spot on the mountain. His countenance wears a solemn aspect, for he has serious business on hand, yet there is no sign of hesitation or wavering. He is not abashed by the presence of royalty, or by the dazzling vestments of the priesthood. He realizes that great issues are at stake and that the cause of Jehovah is represented by him alone. Yet although alone in the multitude, he is not alone, for God is with him, and it will soon be demonstrated that even with thousands confronting him, with God on his side he is in the majority.

Let us get clearly in mind the point at issue. We should remember that the people were strongly addicted to idolatry. While not ignoring the idea of Jehovah, the invisible God, or formally denying him, they also recognized Baal and the pagan divinities as equally entitled to their homage. In their thought, indeed, Baal was essentially the same as Jehovah, and images of him and of other divinities were set up in many places for worship. This pagan worship was connected with rites which were of a vile and indecent character. But to Elijah and those who with him believed in Jehovah—the one God of heaven, holy, pure, and omnipotent, with whom their past history as a people had been linked—was exclusively entitled to divine honors. It was a question between the pure worship of the one Jehovah, right-

eous and holy, with its uplifting influences, on the one hand, and the debasing worship of Baal and other immoral divinities combined with a perverted Jehovah-worship, on the other. This question was now to be settled in a way which should leave no room for doubt.

Elijah steps forward and addresses the people. "How long go ye limping between the two sides?" How long will ye sway backward and forward like a pendulum between trust in the living and true God, and devotion to an unreal and lifeless Baal? If the Lord, your nation's own Jehovah, be God, follow him; but if Baal be really the supreme, almighty one, then follow him. There was a deep silence in the assembly. The people answered him not a word. They could not escape his logic, yet they seemed not to be ready to make a bold and firm decision. The prophet next proposes a test under circumstances which should preclude the possibility of mistake or deception. The prophets of Baal were to take a bullock, cut it in pieces, place it on an altar, but with no fire under it. Then they were to call on Baal to consume the sacrifice. Elijah was to do the same and call upon Jehovah. The god who should answer by fire should be the recognized God. The test was to be open to every eye so that all might know absolutely whether Jehovah or Baal were the true God. All the people answered, "It is well spoken." (Ch. 18: 21-24.)

The point of the proposal lay in this, that fire was the element over which Baal was believed by his followers to have peculiar power. It would be no difficult thing, therefore, if he were a real god, to manifest himself at this time and in this way.

The issue was squarely joined in the presence of the

whole multitude. The priests of Baal were committed to it, there was no backing down; and Elijah was committed to it. Whatever the result, the report of it would spread over the country, into every hamlet, and be discussed at every fireside. One side or the other would be vindicated. Elijah calls upon the priests of Baal to make their trial first. When they had finished, he would take his turn. He gave them every advantage. The whole day was before them. Having slain their bullock and placed it upon the altar, they called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, "O Baal, hear us." But there was no answering voice, no token that Baal had heard a word of their prayer. As their agony increased, they proceeded to dance about the altar in the fanatical way which is still to be witnessed by the devotees of oriental religions, and to scream with an energy which believes that it will be heard for its much speaking. Still no fire descended upon the altar. Is this the religion for which the people had turned their back upon Jehovah? Elijah began to taunt them. "Cry aloud;" he says, "for he is a god: either he is musing, or he is gone aside, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth and must be awaked." They are stung by his sarcastic words. They became frantic. Louder still they cry. They mutilate themselves with knives and lances till the blood gushes out, in order to appease their god if perchance he is angered. So they continue until evening, but the sacrifice still remains unconsumed. There was no fire, no sign of recognition from the heavens above or the earth beneath. The defeat of Baal was beyond all question. (Ch. 18: 25-29.)

It was now Elijah's turn. It remained for him to

prove that Jehovah was not as Baal. Notice the calmness and tranquillity of the prophet, how deliberately he proceeds, how he rises to the great occasion. He bids the hostile prophets to stand aloof and calls the people near. He is standing amidst the ruins of an ancient altar of Jehovah. With his own hands he gathers twelve stones from the fragments and piles them up. The altar repaired, he digs a trench about it, places the wood in order, makes ready the sacrifice, places it in position. Then to render it doubly certain to the multitude that there is no deception, no trickery, he ordered water to be poured again and again over the sacrifice and the wood, till all was thoroughly soaked, and until even the trench around the altar was filled. Then as the sun began to descend toward the western sea and the hour of the evening sacrifice drew near, he bowed himself in prayer. With no frantic gesticulation, no vain repetitions, he sent up this simple, comprehensive petition:—"O Jehovah, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O Jehovah, hear me, that this people may know that thou, Jehovah, art God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again." (Ch. 30-37.)

Then the answer, which had been denied to the large concourse of false prophets with their many hours of eager supplication and self-inflicted torture, came. In it was seen the difference between the vain and unmeaning superstition of fanatics which availeth nothing, and the "effectual, fervent prayer of the righteous man," which availeth much. "Then the fire of Jehovah fell, and consumed the burnt offering, and the wood, and the stones,

and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench." The people were awe-stricken. They fell on their faces. The whole multitude on the mountain side lay prostrate. Together they cried, "Jehovah, he is God; Jehovah, he is God." (5:38, 39.)

It was a thrilling scene. Elijah was vindicated. Elijah's God was vindicated. Consternation rested upon the priests of Baal, and the multitude in their revulsion of feeling and at the command of Elijah, took them all down to the gorge of the Kishon and slew them there. (5:40.) A little hill by the river's bank is still pointed out as the scene of the slaughter. It was a righteous judgment upon the deceivers of the people, sinners against the state, rebels against the authority of its only true Sovereign. Elijah's summary method of dealing with these priests has been criticized, but in that rude age, without the light which Jesus gave to the world, and with the zeal the prophet had for the honor of Jehovah, it may be sufficiently accounted for. Perhaps after his subsequent experience at Horeb, when he heard the "still small voice," he might have pursued a course less severe.

The purpose of the drought was now fulfilled. Baal was defeated and Jehovah acknowledged as God in Israel. Elijah knew that rain was near at hand. In that belief he told Ahab to arise and eat, which was simply an oriental method of announcing to him the end of the drought and its distress. Elijah then betook himself to the top of Carmel for prayer. The rain he knew would come according to his word. He casts himself upon the earth, and entreats that the favor of God may rest upon these erring people, that his blessing may be poured out upon them, especially that rain, so greatly needed, may be given,

that the earth may be watered, and that the famine and woe of the land may be stayed. As he closes his prayer he bids his servant go up and look toward the sea. He obeyed, and returned saying, "There is nothing." Again the prophet prayed, and again the servant went and looked, and returned with the same message, until he had ascended seven times and looked, and each time there was nothing. At last out of the far horizon, there arose a little cloud, the first that for days and months had passed across the heavens. This he reported to the prophet. "Behold, there ariseth a cloud out of the sea, as small as a man's hand."

Again was Elijah's faith vindicated. This was the earnest of the answer, the prelude of the plentiful rain. Immediately he sent word to Ahab to prepare his chariot to return in haste to his palace, which was about fifteen miles distant across the plain, lest he should be delayed by the approaching storm. Ahab drove swiftly, while Elijah, having girded up his loins, ran before the chariot, as the Bedouin of his native Gilead would still run, to the very gates of the city of Jezreel. (5:41-46.)

Thus ended that memorable day, with its contest, its vindication of Jehovah, its destruction of the enemies of the people, its earnest prayer, its glorious and refreshing rain.

"How long go ye limping between the two sides?" is the word for us and for our times, as truly as for Israel of old. If God be God, if Jehovah be real, the one he is represented to be in the Word of God, the one we have been taught through the years to reverence and to worship—follow Him, serve and obey Him. But if Baal

be God, if some one or something other than Jehovah be the object which ought to claim our supreme devotion, serve him. No man can serve two masters. We cannot recognize and obey as supreme both God and mammon. It must be the one or the other. If it is not Jehovah alone and exclusively, it is some Baal. There is no middle ground. How long halt ye? how long vacillate between the two? Each one must settle the question for himself. Each one has settled the question. The choice may be revoked, but so far as the present moment is concerned, each one is already serving the god of his choice.

The Baal of one man may be money. Money getting absorbs all his thought. The all-mastering aim of his life is to get rich. All else is secondary and subordinate. This it is which stands between him and the supreme worship of the Lord Jesus. Another man's Baal is pleasure. He lives for the present and for present gratification alone. Everything is subordinated to this. The Baal of still another is worldly ambition. To make a name, to attain to conspicuous station, to revel in the plaudits of the multitude, or to be popular in one way or another—this is the goal of his desire. There are many things, to be sure, which are not necessarily sinful or wrong in themselves, but which become so when devotion to them is so absorbing as to stand in the way of one's recognizing and acting upon the claims of God upon him. Whatever, in fact, comes between one's soul and one's duty to his Master, may be regarded as his Baal. To it his real worship is given.

The assembled multitudes on Carmel witnessed a great test. They saw the fire descend, they were satisfied that Jehovah was God and that they ought to worship Him,

and we are left to infer that some of them, at least, began to shape their lives accordingly. So the men of this age have seen how God's fire has descended from heaven upon many nations, many peoples: history has tested the question. They have seen the effects of the descending fire from time to time upon individual hearts, as it has melted them in penitence and love. They can have no doubt as to who is God, or of their obligation to worship and to serve him. Time and again God has been vindicated before their eyes. The question comes to each one individually and personally, Whom will you serve, Baal or Jehovah? How long go ye limping between the two sides? Choose ye this day whom ye will serve.

## II. A Chapter of Marvels.

The sixth chapter of the Gospel according to John is one of the remarkable chapters of the Bible. This is not because, as in the case of some of the passages of the old prophets, of the lofty grandeur of its thought or style; nor is it to be compared with the songs of Moses and Deborah, which are justly regarded as the noblest specimens of Hebrew literature. Neither is it like the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, which is perhaps the finest piece of poetic prophecy in the Old Testament; or like Paul's felicitous yet forcible address before Festus and Agrippa as found in the twenty-sixth chapter of Acts. It differs widely from that beautiful gem on charity or love, the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians, and from that notable portrait gallery of saints which is presented in the eleventh of Hebrews. The sixth chapter of John is not remarkable in any such sense as the Scrip-

ture just named. It is remarkable for what it contains, for the marvelous facts which it records. It reports a great miracle and a mighty enthusiasm growing out of it; a fearful storm on the lake of Galilee, and a wonderful deliverance of the imperiled disciples; a great sermon, a severe trial of faith, and an apostasy. The history of a crisis in the Savior's ministry and in the experience of the twelve, is vividly depicted. The study of such a chapter can hardly fail to prove profitable, both because of the facts it contains, and the valuable lessons which are suggested by them. Two notable incidents from it are herewith considered.

I.

The first event of importance which is noted in this chapter is the miracle of feeding the five thousand. This is the only miracle which is described by all four of the evangelists. The scene of it was the northeast shore of the sea of Galilee. It occurred toward the close of the second year of Christ's public ministry, which was spent mostly in the province of Galilee, and which has been termed the year of his popularity. At that time Galilee teemed with population. It abounded in towns and villages, and around the sea of Galilee there were many important cities. The year was filled, on Christ's part, with incessant activity. His fame had preceded him before he came to the province. Reports of his miracles spread through the crowded population like wildfire. His preaching was attended by immense throngs everywhere, and multitudes, as he went about, were healed by him of their diseases. At the time referred to in this chapter, Jesus

had sought retirement and rest for a season, across the lake. Yet in the feverish state of the popular thought respecting Him, it seemed impossible to escape from the thronging multitudes. Whatever movement Jesus made was observed, and at this time the people flocked along the shore toward the place for which He and the disciples had sailed from the western shore of the lake. The great number in this curious crowd, which all the evangelists agree was five thousand, testified to the widespread excitement. The miracle consisted in feeding this multitude when the sum total of the food which could be collected by the disciples was hardly sufficient for half a score of persons. All the gospel writers narrate the incident with minuteness and graphic detail.

We can picture to our minds the scene. "There was much grass in the place." The people are moving about, as we have seen crowds moving about in some grassy park at a public celebration. There has been a conference between Jesus and his disciples as to how to feed them, for the afternoon has advanced toward evening and the people are without food. The disciples had reported to the Master that only five small loaves and two small fishes, which a lad had for sale, could be secured. "Make the people sit down," said Jesus, in order that they might the more readily be served. They sat down in companies of fifties and hundreds. What a sight it must have been, so many groups of people, clad in the variegated costumes which are so congenial to the oriental taste, all of them eager and expectant! Observe how their turbaned heads move and what gestures they make as they converse among themselves. Jesus blesses the bread which has been placed in his hands,

after which the distribution begins. It is first given to the disciples, who in turn pass it to the people. It is through the hands of his followers that Christ usually bestows His mercies upon those who are in need. Not a little time would be required for serving so many, but the supply, meanwhile, is unexhausted. There is an abundance for all, yea, more than enough, since after every want has been satisfied, twelve baskets of fragments are gathered up.

The people are astonished, as well they may be, at what has taken place. At once they recognize in the miracle worker the prophet so long foretold, the Messiah, who, in the popular but perverted conception of the Jews, was to be a mighty king who would deliver their nation from the Roman yoke and restore it to its ancient glory and power among the nations of the earth. The swelling tide of enthusiasm rises to its full height. The people are ready to crown and proclaim Jesus king in place of the despotic and hated Herod. They would even, if necessary, make him king by force, and start immediately for Jerusalem to enthrone him.

Discerning this purpose on their part, and recognizing the danger in which it would involve them all with the Roman government—realizing also that such a purpose, if carried out, would jeopardize his whole mission to the world, his kingdom being spiritual in its nature and its seat in the hearts of men, rather than material and upheld by force—Jesus saw the necessity of immediately extricating himself from the perilous situation occasioned by the enthusiasm of the multitude. It was important, too, that his disciples be sent away lest they should themselves be influenced by that popular feeling with which

they were inclined to sympathize. Accordingly he dismissed the multitude, gave directions to the disciples to row across the lake to the western shore, while he himself, quietly and unobserved, withdrew and sought the seclusion of a mountain retreat where he might be alone and spend the night in communing with his Father. He had reached a point when it was necessary to save himself from his friends.

This was one of the most striking and mighty of all the miracles which Christ wrought. It was a miracle of immediate and extensive creation, which is the prerogative of divinity alone. It was directly confirmatory of the divine power which was resident in Him. It was to prove to his readers that Jesus is divine—the Son of God—that John wrote his gospel. This purpose dominates the book and determined the selection of the material which entered into its composition. The incidents, the addresses, the miracles, those teachings of Christ which would most conclusively demonstrate his divine character, were the ones which John selected out of the wealth of material which was available to him for his purpose.

And yet, marvelous as, humanly speaking, this miracle of feeding the multitude was—any miracle for that matter is marvelous—it was but in keeping with Christ's exalted character as the Son of God, and his exalted mission of introducing the one true religion which was to affect the life and destiny of millions upon millions of people yet unborn. It was only what we might expect, that his actions, his words, his deeds, should harmonize with his character. The mighty works which

Christ did were simply natural manifestations of his power. In reality, he was Himself the greatest of all miracles, and the miraculous antecedents of his birth, the miracles of his ministry, the mighty miracle, crowning all, of his resurrection, were in keeping with his character and mission. They were as natural to Him, being such as He was, as ordinary deeds are to ordinary men. Yet the exercise of this supernatural power was never for mere personal ends, nor to gratify curiosity, but always for the good of men, and for the promotion of the high ends of the kingdom of God.

The incident is fertile in its suggestiveness for the believer. God's resources for the supply of the material needs of his people are no less abundant now, and no less free, than when this miracle was wrought. If He does not see fit to provide the necessities of life to those in need in the same way now as then, He is able to do so by other means no less effectively. All the marvelous operations of Providence are under his immediate control, and through this agency he can readily effect his purposes. For those who love Him, realize their dependence upon Him, have faith in Him without which it is impossible to please Him "all things work together for good."

But God's bountiful resources for the supply of material needs, which was so wondrously exemplified in the miracle of feeding the multitude, is typical of a similar exhaustlessness of resources with reference to supplying the spiritual needs of men. Some of the profoundest, most urgent needs of our nature are spiritual. If these do not rise to consciousness early in life, they do so as

the years advance, as cares multiply, and troubles increase. But the provision for supplying these needs is ample. Just how it is made available in every individual case, just how it perfectly answers every craving of the soul, we may not fully understand, but we know the blessed fact. As in the home which the prodigal abandoned there was food enough and to spare if he would but return and avail himself of it, so in the spiritual storehouse of the Father above, there is enough and to spare for his children, and it is freely imparted to such of them as truly seek it. It is sad that so many are spiritually starving on their way through the world, when they might be fed; mourning when they might rejoice; dissatisfied with the things which the world affords, yet not willing to accept the food which Christ has provided; overborne by trouble and care, when they might live in perfect peace. It seems pitiable to think of the world hungry, even starving, and God waiting to satisfy the craving appetite, and as willing to do so as Christ was to feed the multitude.

2.

The night which Christ spent on the mountain after the exciting events connected with the miracle of feeding the five thousand, was one of struggle with his own thoughts and of communion with his Father. One great peril had been escaped—he had saved himself from the dangerous enthusiasm of the multitude who would make him king; but another threatens him. The disciples whom he had hurriedly sent off by boat to escape the temptation growing out of the prevailing excitement concerning

himself, have been overtaken by a sudden storm and are in imminent danger of being drowned. Though so small —only thirteen or fourteen miles long by about seven broad—the sea of Galilee is peculiarly liable, since it is surrounded by high table lands, to be visited by sharp squalls of tropical violence. When they suddenly sweep down, as frequently they do, through the narrow wadies from the hights above, the lake, in a moment, is in commotion, and whitecaps everywhere appear. Such a storm as this had overtaken the disciples in the darkness of the night as they were about half way across the lake. But although it arose suddenly, it did not, as is often the case, as suddenly abate. It continued for several hours, even until the gray light of dawn. Though they rowed with all their might, the disciples were unable to make any headway. They could only hold their own against wind and wave. Progress was out of the question. Indeed they were in momentary danger of being overborne by the fury of the storm.

When their peril was greatest, they were terrified yet more by what seemed to be a spirit approaching them on the waves. They had no expectation of Jesus coming to them, and did not realize that it was He who was drawing near for their relief. But He had not forgotten them; He knew the emergency which had overtaken them; and He resolved to go to them in their distress. The water and the waves were no barrier to the Son of God. Why should they be? He calms their fears by his familiar voice: "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid." They receive Him joyfully into the boat, the storm begins to subside, and soon they are safely at the landing they were seeking to make.

It was an impressive lesson of faith for the disciples to learn. Like children—for children they were in matters of faith—and like ourselves too,—they had forgotten the deliverance of the multitude from hunger, so that their present emergency found them apprehensive and fearful. On another occasion, on this same lake, they had been overtaken by a similar storm, their boat had been covered with waves and filled almost to sinking. In their distress they aroused Jesus by their cries, who lay sleeping in the stern of the boat, who quietly rebuked the winds, and at the same time rebuked the disciples for their lack of faith. This time the disciples were alone in the boat. Perhaps this absence of Jesus had been designed to prepare them for the future, when, physically speaking, he would be permanently absent from them. But even though absent on this occasion, his thought was upon them, and at the crisis of their peril He appeared for their deliverance. These varied experiences of the disciples could hardly fail to develop in them a conviction that the Savior would never fail to deliver them however great the peril through which, in His service, they might be called to pass.

But this incident affords encouragement to our own weak faith as truly as it did for that of the disciples. Our experience in life is by no means free from storms, in which faith is tried to the utmost. They come in various ways. Whatever brings trial, may be considered as of this nature. Yet when these storms come, too often, like the disciples, we forget former deliverances, our experience seems to be exceptional, and we are filled with anxiety and apprehension. Will the light ever dawn, will the storm ever abate, will relief ever come?

Even though we cling to hope, it is more of a forlorn hope than like an anchor to the soul, sure and steadfast. Yet at length Jesus providentially appears, the way opens out of the perplexity, the morning dawns, and we find ourselves straightway at the land. How often, too, we forget to recognize from whom the deliverance comes. We can reason about faith and providence for others, even rebuke them for their lack of confidence, but when the trial comes to ourselves, God seems far from us. What a rebuke to our faithlessness each deliverance ought to be, and yet time after time we pass through the same experience, trial, darkness, distress, deliverance, and still waver in our confidence. When will we ever learn the lesson of trust? The comforting thought is, that as Christ did not forget His disciples in their danger, even though they did not realize it, so he is by no means unmindful of his own today in their distresses. In seasons of special trial He is specially watchful over them.

At the seashore, when, at the bathing hour, scores of summer visitors go into the cooling waters as they come rolling in, the bathing master and assistant are always on hand ready for any emergency which may require their aid. In ordinary weather they sit or recline upon the sandy beach, chatting, enjoying the exhilarating scene along with the crowd of on-lookers, apparently oblivious of everything connected with the surf. But they are not oblivious. They observe every movement of the bathers, and if any one goes out too far, or shows signs of exhaustion, they are ready to go at once to the rescue. One morning a few summers ago, the wind was blowing quite severely, not enough to prevent bath-

ing, but sufficiently to occasion some danger from the strong undertow if one did not keep more than usually close to the shore. On this morning these two men were standing instead of sitting or reclining. They were closer to the water's edge than usual. Small ropes were attached to belts about their waists, to be fastened on shore, or held by some one, in case they were obliged to go into the water to rescue an imperiled person. In like manner the thought and the eye of Jesus are upon His disciples. He may seem to be indifferent, but He is not indifferent. He is on the alert, as these faithful bathing masters were, quick to discern any signs of approaching danger, and ready promptly to render needed assistance or to rescue any one in peril.

But not only is the thought of Christ upon His disciples in their trouble, He goes to them to help them to endure, or to rescue them when the emergency actually comes, as he went to the storm-tossed disciples. It may be in unlooked-for ways that He will appear, or He may not go at once in order that their faith may be tested. In some way, by his Spirit, or by some kind providence, He manifests Himself to their troubled hearts at just the moment when they feel, perhaps, that they are on the very point of perishing. On that windy morning at the seaside, when the bathing masters were more on the alert than usual and equipped for any exigency which might arise, they did not have long to wait. A venturesome young lady swam out farther than her companions, too far as it proved, not realizing her danger until she endeavored to return. Then she was seen to struggle, but unavailingly, and to be borne farther and farther out. These watchful men, quick to perceive the situation, in-

stantly plunged into the water—the ropes attached to their waists being fastened on shore—swam to her and rescued her just as she was about to perish.

So in the moment of emergency, if not before, Christ appears to his distressed disciples. How often, when all hope of relief has been given up, relief has come, and none the less truly from the Lord though we fail to perceive it. He comes to us over the waves of our trouble, perhaps in the person of some kind friend, or through the message of a sermon, or in timely advice, or in some providence opening the way out of our embarrassment. We did not behold him with the natural eye, but the results were just as real as if he had been present in person. Perhaps his coming was delayed. It was so in the deliverance wrought on the lake. It was not until the fourth watch that He went to his despairing disciples. So our deliverances have not always come immediately. We have been left to ourselves that we might test our strength and discover our weakness. The Lord has waited until the object of His discipline has been accomplished, then He has drawn near and relieved us.

The disciples did not know Him when He came; their distress was aggravated for the moment by supposing Him to be a ghost. Have we never mistaken Christ—if not for a ghost, at any rate for an evil spirit, or an evil influence? Says a writer of large Christian experience:—"We have been in trouble, and matters as we think have come to a crisis, when something happens which at first we judge will surely bring ruin upon us and we cry out for fear. But wait a little, in a wonderful way we see what at first sight seemed our undoing

has actually become our salvation. Have you ever had an experience like that? And as you heard the Master's voice saying to you, 'It is I, be not afraid,' have you not had your fears put to shame and felt reproved by his favor? This night scene on the Galilean lake was the rehearsal of much which is happening every day to the people of God, and if we studied more closely we should have fewer difficulties about what we call the mysteries of Providence."

Rev. John McNeill tells a very interesting story of his own boyhood in Scotland, which well illustrates the thoughtfulness of God for His people and His nearness in times of need. He says he was working in the town several miles from home; but always on Saturday night, no matter how late he got through his work, he would walk home, so as to wake up at home on Sunday morning, and spend the day with his father and mother. During the week he lived in lodgings in town. The road home was very lonely, through a dreary glen. One Saturday night, it was nearly midnight when he got through business, and started to tramp six or seven miles over the lonely way home. The road had a bad name. It was a highway between one seaport and another, and there were ugly stories about men being knocked down and robbed. He was a young, nervous lad of about seventeen, and it seemed to him in the darkness, every little while, that somebody was springing through a hedge at him. This particular night was very black, and two miles from his home it got blacker than ever: there was a high wooded hill on the right, and another on the left, and no light from moon or star or kindly cottage window. He was just entering this dark defile, and

was hurrying, nervous and afraid, when suddenly he thought his heart would leave him, and then it came leaping back into him. About 100 yards ahead, in the densest of the darkness, there suddenly rang out a great, strong, cheery voice, "Is that you Johnnie?" It was his father, the bravest, strongest man he had ever known. He knew it was a black, gruesome night, and that the boy was nervous, so like a father, he arranged to be waiting for him at the worst part of the road, at the gloomiest point in it, where the fears of his son would be worst, and his nervousness greatest. For a moment the boy was more afraid than ever, but as soon as he recognized the father's voice, his fears departed. Just so as at times we have been walking along a dark and gloomy path, Christ has appeared to us. In the darkest place he has been waiting for us. And as he quieted the frightened disciples by His loving word, "It is I, be not afraid," so is He ever ready to bring relief and comfort to us if we will but recognize His presence.

## III. The Passion Scenes.

Anything which helps to throw light upon the sacred Word, to render its characters more real, its scenes more vivid, or in any way to add interest to its reading and study, is well worth the attention of the Bible student.

Perhaps nothing, during the last two or three decades, or since public attention has been turned specially to it, has done more to convey a realistic impression of the closing scenes of Christ's earthly life, than the remarkable religious drama called the Passion Play, which is performed every ten years by the villagers of Ober-

Ammergau in the highlands of Bavaria. It will be in keeping with the scope of the volume, and of the present subdivision in particular, to give some account of it.

The play itself deals only with Christ's career from the triumphal entry into Jerusalem to the ascension. It includes, among other things, the driving out of the money changers from the temple, the institution of the supper, the touching incidents of the garden, the betrayal by the treacherous disciple, the trial, crucifixion, burial and resurrection. (Matt. 21-28, Mark 14-16, Luke 19-24, John 12-21). Each act is prefaced with one or two tableaux of Old Testament scenes which seem to be typical of the event, or in some sense to suggest it. At the last presentation of this drama, (1900), there were nearly 700 performers, old and young, dressed in the brilliant oriental costumes of the time of Christ and the apostles. The representation is interspersed with music, and occupies seven or eight hours. With the villagers it takes on the character of a religious service. It is given on Sundays, is sometimes repeated on Mondays, and during the three or four months of its continuance, vast multitudes are in attendance from all parts of Europe and America.

The tradition concerning the origin of the play, which doubtless has some basis in historic fact, is as follows: In 1633 a terrible pestilence swept over the villages of southern Germany, and such were its ravages that the whole population seemed about to be cut off. All classes and conditions of the people were alike stricken down. Ober-Ammergau was quarantined rigorously and escaped the contagion, until a day laborer from the place who had been at work elsewhere, wishing to visit his wife

and children, stealthily returned and brought the plague with him. Within thirty-three days eighty-four persons died. Then the villagers held a meeting and vowed before God that if in mercy he would stay the disease, they would present in his honor every ten years, the tragedy of the Passion of his Son, Jesus Christ. No one else died, so runs the story, and the next year the play was given. In spite of occasional interruptions it has been rendered once in ten years since A. D. 1680. In 1870 it was interrupted by the Franco-Prussian war, but it was resumed and finished in 1871.

Probably the play had existed in some form before, perhaps for a long time. It resembles somewhat the miracle and mystery plays of the middle ages. It has been changed in form during the lapse of years, and a few characters, notably that of Lucifer, have been omitted. Up to about seventy years ago, it was given in the open air in the church-yard, but it is now performed on the edge of the village in a large building constructed for the purpose, and capable of seating four or five thousand people. Very little of the money received from admission fees has heretofore gone to the actors. They play from love or as a religious service, although their preparations are begun two or three years before the drama is given, and rehearsals, involving the expenditure of much time and labor, are held frequently for six months preceding the first performance. The net proceeds, which are of course large, have been devoted chiefly to religious or municipal purposes. The village itself, at the time of the last presentation, contained only fourteen hundred people. It nestles among the Bavarian Alps, at the gateway of a beautiful valley, is surrounded

by lofty mountains, and is nearly 3,000 feet above the sea. It is built without apparent plan. The streets radiate in every direction from the cathedral, which is near the center of the village. The roofs of the low, white, plastered houses, project far over the eaves, and are held down by rows of heavy stones, to keep them from blowing off in wind storms. Had it not been for the Passion Play, very likely the great world had never heard of Ober-Ammergau.

The inhabitants are a simple, unsophisticated people, whom even the crowds they now entertain every ten years have failed to render noticeably sharp or worldly. They have not been affected by the fame of their work. They are quiet, peace-loving, honest. Law courts and jail are unnecessary. They are truly devout, and although Romanists, and not wholly free from superstition, they impress their visitors by the manifest sincerity of their religious feeling. To them the Passion Play is the most solemn of all conceivable dramas, and to be permitted to take a leading part in it is one of the highest ambitions they cherish. Their chief occupation is wood carving, in which they are very expert.

Ober-Ammergau is about three hours by rail from Munich, the capital of Bavaria. The route passes through a green and inviting region where the peasants are seen at work, the women who assist in it apparently as robust and efficient as the men. Rising majestically in the distance, lofty peaks, covered with snow till late in summer, are seen. In addition to the crowds which come from a distance, some of them thousands of miles, multitudes who live near by come in wagons, in carriages, on horseback and on foot. The latter are mostly

Bavarian mountaineers, who, in their native costumes, present a picturesque appearance. The people in attendance are of all nationalities.

Early Sunday morning the villagers are awakened by the firing of the village cannon, which is planted on the meadow outside its limits. This is to rouse the people and call the performers to mass in the church before repairing to the theater. By half-past seven o'clock a dense crowd of people has gathered around the doors of the theater, and when they are thrown open, the spacious building is speedily filled by an eager, expectant, yet sober audience. The stage, which is open to the sky, extends the entire length of the building, is forty feet in depth, and thus gives ample opportunity for the various scenes and actors. The hills and mountains rise in plain view near at hand on every side, and are suggestive of the mountains round about Jerusalem, to which we are transported in imagination by the scenery and arrangements of the stage.

Precisely at 8 o'clock the booming of the cannon is again heard, this time to announce the beginning of the play. Were the curtain removed while the overture is being played, the heart of many an indifferent spectator would be filled with surprise and not a little touched, for the 700 actors, of whom fifty are women and two hundred are children, together with their pastor, have assembled, and for a few moments engage in silent prayer. This is the unseen prelude to the play.

The chorus appears in front of the curtain, thirty-five singers in all, young men, young women, half of them entering from a colonnade on either side. They stand before the audience in a slightly concave circle, with hands

folded across the breast in the attitude of prayerful repose. They are clad in flowing robes of various colors, over which a white tunic with golden fringe, and a colored mantle are worn. They sing or recite, explaining what is to come and its connection with what has preceded in each case, and add much to the impressiveness of the words by expressive gestures. The Choragus, as he is called, or leader, stands in the center and opens the play by setting forth the main object of the performance, to show how the fallen race of man was reconciled to God through the blood of his only begotten Son.

After their voices have died away, the performers divide and retire to the sides of the stage. The curtain then rises and displays a magnificent tableau representing Adam and Eve driven out of the garden of Eden by the angel with flaming sword. (Gen. 2:23, 24.) Paradise lies in the background, in the center of which is seen the tree of life laden with luscious fruit; and, partially concealed among the branches, the tempter, in the form of a serpent. While the tableau is exposed to the gaze of the spectators, the Choragus gives in song the story of its significance. The curtain falls again, the singers resume their position on the stage, and the message of salvation is announced. When they retire, the second tableau, entitled "The Adoration of the Cross," is presented. Before a large cross planted upon a rock, symbolical of Christianity, a number of heavenly genii, represented by little children of the village, who are clad in garments of white and in mantles of bright colors, stand or kneel in the attitude of worship. The tableau, so beautiful in itself, is presented with marvelous art by the infant dramatists. In

these two tableaux and in the songs of the chorus, are embodied the general outline of the play, as well as the scope of the drama of redemption.

One of the finest of the tableaux is that representing the fall of manna in the wilderness. (Ex. 16: 14-16.) Several hundred persons, the youngest not quite three years old, are busy in forming the various groups of this exquisite picture. The Israelites stand in dense crowds, the children in the foreground, and back of the groups, youth and maidens appear. Mothers hold their babes in their arms, while aged men are in the rear. Moses, who is leading the Israelites through the desert, is the most conspicuous figure, and is recognized by means of golden rays upon his head. He holds a staff in his hand which points toward heaven. With the exception of Moses, Aaron the high priest occupies the most prominent position. Every hand is stretched out and every eye is directed toward heaven from which an abundance of manna, represented by bits of white paper, uninterruptedly falls. The little children, with their innocent faces turned upward, and holding out their baskets and aprons to catch the sweet food before it reaches the earth, form an attractive feature of the scene. It is a beautiful picture, and murmurs of applause are heard among the thousands of spectators, who would have been glad to dwell longer upon it, but the curtain falls and hides it from view.

These are a few of the leading tableaux, nearly all of which are very fine—some of them simple, requiring few persons, others complex in grouping and arrangement, and requiring many participants. Not a few of

them elicit manifestations of delight from the audience. They bring out with vividness scenes from the Old Testament.

There is too much in the play to permit us to describe it in detail. Only a few of the leading scenes can be dwelt upon. Some parts of the drama are touching in the extreme. During its performance the audience remains breathlessly still, and many a moistened eye testifies to the deep impression made upon it. One hardly realizes the passing of the hours. There is not the slightest trace of disorder in the vast congregation at any time. There is very little to shock the sensibilities, owing to the good taste evinced in the preparation and execution of the play, although some portions of it, like the crucifixion scene, cannot but cause a shudder.

The first act brings most of the players to view. It represents the triumphal entry into Jerusalem. As the chorus retires after the introductory tableaux,—from the distance, beyond the city as it were, sounds of rejoicing, of glad shouting and singing are heard. Soon the crowd appears. In the middle of it Christ himself, a stately figure, is seen. He is riding sideways upon an ass, and is surrounded by the twelve. The people are singing hosannas and strewing palm branches in the way. Thus the exultant procession advances. The person of the Savior forms the central figure of the scene. Over his seamless garment of pale gray, a crimson robe is draped. He raises his hands as if to bless or teach the people, though his words are lost in the strains of the beautiful hosannas, sung by hundreds of voices.

Reaching the center of the stage, with graceful ease

he dismounts from the animal on which he has been sitting. While the people gather about him a new scene is revealed. With conscious dignity he enters the procession, which has been arranged to represent that which went up to the temple, and proceeds to rebuke the money changers who had defiled it by their traffic. While doing so, he takes from one of the booths a number of cords used for the tethering of lambs. He then advances to where the traffic is most vigorous and noisy, and to the great consternation of the traders, overturns their seats and tables, drives out the sheep, dashes jars to the ground, while the doves, released from their cages, fly away in haste to their cots in the village. The money changers, unable to rescue all their effects, gather up the coins which lie scattered on the floor, and exchange menacing glances and murmurs with each other. During this display of zeal and authority on the part of the Savior, he does not lose his dignified composure.

A scene of still greater confusion follows. The priesthood, led by Caiaphas and Annas, appear and demand excitedly by what authority the Savior has acted. They charge him with rebelling against the religion of Moses and the prophets, and then seek to win the people to their side and to awaken prejudice against him. The charge against him is heartily endorsed by those whose illegitimate business in the temple has been interrupted, and the multitude are easily impressed by the addresses of the high priests and Pharisees, and especially by the words of Caiaphas. While the enraged Pharisees and merchants retire, plotting against the Savior, the latter takes dignified leave of the people and returns with his disciples over Olivet to Bethany. In this act of the play

we see the germ of the conspiracy which leads to the final catastrophe.

The next scene represents the Jewish Sanhedrin. The priests, composing the assembly, dressed in their robes of offices, are seated on benches about the room. The object of their meeting is to discuss what measures shall be taken against the Galilean. The discussion is earnest and violent, as of desperate men, determined to compass their purpose, and gain possession of their victim at all hazards. Various plans are suggested. Finally it is intimated by one of the enraged money changers who has been called in, that there is one among Christ's disciples who is thought capable of betraying his Master, whereupon plans are laid to induce him to do so, and the session closes with high satisfaction.

The next scene represents Christ and his disciples in the streets of Bethany on their way to the home of Mary and Martha. Here occurs the touching incident of anointing the Savior's feet with the costly ointment. The disciples gather around their Master in astonishment, while Judas excitedly calls attention to the great waste which this tribute of love has occasioned. Here, in the conduct of Judas, according to the conception of the composer of the drama, is the germ of the betrayal, for here selfishness, envy, and covetousness begin to take possession of his soul.

But Jesus commends the act of Mary. It was one of pure devotion, and he declares that wherever his gospel should be preached throughout the whole world, this that she had done should be told as a memorial of her—a prediction which has been verified in every generation since.

He then takes his leave. Sad adieus are spoken. With

his disciples he begins His last journey over Olivet to Jerusalem. The road sweeps around the southern shoulder of the central mass of the mountain—just as it does today. At length they reach the point where their eyes fall upon the city. Even now, in its compactness, walled in on every side, the city is beautiful to look upon, with its large open space in front, called the temple area, where the temple once was, but where now is a large octagonal Mohammedan mosque, surmounted by a huge black dome, the most conspicuous object before us. But if so beautiful a picture now, what must it have been in the time of Christ? The sumptuous palace of Herod was then standing. The picturesque outlines of the streets, the temple directly in front with its golden and glittering courts, were in full view. Over all rested the spell of a history of 2000 years. As Christ beheld the scene his emotions overpowered him and he wept—wept over the history of wickedness and guilt which Jerusalem had made for itself, over its present ingratitude and hardness of heart, over its coming retribution. Shortly after he bids Peter and John go to the city and prepare the Passover festival, and to the rest of the disciples he says: "The hour is near when the Scriptures shall be fulfilled."

During this scene Judas remains at one side of the stage, gloomily brooding over the Savior's words, and holding in his hand his empty purse. As Christ leaves the scene to go to the city, the disciples follow him, with the exception of Judas, who remains behind, struggling with the terrible thoughts which have arisen in his mind. While thus struggling, the two spies, sent by the Sanhedrin, arrive. A brief conversation ensues and he is persuaded, apparently with ease, to accept the terms of be-

trayal which they propose. The spies then leave to report their success, and Judas is once more alone with his conscience. He gives utterance to the tumult and tossing of his soul in a monologue, which is effectively rendered, and while thus speaking leaves the stage and takes the road to Jerusalem.

The celebration of the Passover by Christ and his disciples is next presented, and as the lifted curtain discloses the upper chamber and the little company gathering about the table, we perceive at once that DeVinci's masterly painting of the Last Supper has been taken as a guide in preparing the scene. Even to minute details it is almost an exact imitation of that celebrated picture. Christ is in the center, and the disciples are at his right and left. While the different parts of the Biblical narrative are reproduced, the eating of the supper, the dispute as to who should be greatest, the lesson of humility in the washing of the disciples' feet by Him who was greatest of all, the withdrawal of Judas as he becomes conscious that his treachery is known, the institution of the sacrament, an almost breathless silence pervades the great assembly. The scene is truly affecting.

Christ and his disciples linger for a season in deep, tender communion. Then a song is sung and they depart. They leave the city by the eastern gate, descend to the deep ravine of the Kidron, cross the stream, and soon come to the garden of Gethsemane at the base of Olivet, where the falling curtain hides them from view.

The next scene represents Judas before the high priest with his empty money bag in his hand. After more or less discussion, a rabbi comes in with the money. Judas steps hastily forward to the table, counts it, and

suspiciously examines and tests each one of the thirty pieces of silver as if distrusting its genuineness. After receiving the money, he unfolds his plan for delivering Christ into the hands of the Jews, and describes the sign by which he will designate the person who is to be seized.

We now return to Gethsemane. As the curtain is raised, we see the garden extending far into the background of the stage. To the right is a slight elevation. To the left are low rocks and shrubs. Christ enters conversing with his disciples. Taking Peter, James, and John with him, and bidding the others remain at the entrance of the garden, he advances a little, and then follow the touching incidents of his pleading prayers, his dreadful agony, his thrice repeated return to the sleeping disciples. After the last prayer, an angel is seen over his head, comforting and strengthening him. The disciples, one after another awake, when Christ says, "The hour is at hand when the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Arise, let us go hence."

The catastrophe is approaching. The clang of arms is heard in the distance. The disciples in the background spring terrified to their feet. While they are anxiously gathering about their Lord, the Roman soldiers, led by Judas, together with priests and Pharisees, with lanterns and torches, appear. Judas hastens on before them. Approaching Jesus, he salutes him with a kiss of recognition and betrayal. Then follow Christ's words of rebuke to the traitorous disciple, his advance with unwonted majesty toward the soldiers, his demand, "Whom seek ye?" their defiant response, "Jesus of Nazareth;" his calm answer, "I am he;" at which they all, soldiers and priests alike, as by some invisible power, are cast to the

ground. But Christ bids them arise and fear not. Then he surrenders himself without resistance; they seize and bind him; one by one the timorous disciples steal away in the darkness, and Christ, amid mockery and abuse, is led from the garden and disappears from view. The impression made by this scene has filled many a heart to overflowing.

It being nearly noon, the play is suspended for an hour in order that the players and spectators may partake of refreshments. It has already lasted four hours, and three more at least will be required to complete it. The majority of the spectators hasten to the homes of the villagers, but there are many who have been too much affected by the heart-moving scenes which they have witnessed to care for food or drink, and prefer to spend the hour in calm reflection, or to seek relief from the tension of the morning by a stroll in the long stretch of meadow beyond the village, and enjoy an unmolested view of the romantic scenery roundabout. Ober-Ammergau is in one of the finest walled valleys of the Alps, a valley which the river Ammer keeps green for half the year. Lofty mountains rise on every hand. The most striking feature of the scene is the peak to the southwest called the Köfel, a bare, rocky height with singularly bold contour. On its summit a large cross has been set, which stands out against the sky with a clearness which is almost solemn. The people regard the Köfel as the guardian of the village.

By one o'clock the thousands are in their places again, and the firing of the cannon announces that the play is

about to be resumed. When everything is in readiness, sweet melancholy strains announce the approaching passion. In the first scene of the afternoon the high priest Annas is represented as standing on the balcony of the house, impatiently awaiting the Roman soldiers with the captive Nazarene. Loud laughter and mockery are heard. The soldiers appear with their captive, and press him forward with great brutality. Jesus is led to the balcony, while the infuriated multitude remains below. The examination commences, but Christ refuses to answer any questions. He is smitten on the face, then is ordered to be taken to Caiaphas, which the soldiers proceed to do, pushing him before them with rudeness.

Caiaphas stands by a kind of throne, surrounded by priests and Pharisees. He is as excited as he was when addressing the Sanhedrin. The few words which Christ is constrained to utter are regarded as blasphemy, and as proof of his unfitness to live. Caiaphas appeals to the assembled priests, tearing open the breast of his garment, and they are unanimous in their declaration that the prisoner is worthy of death. Christ is ordered away to be brought before the council at early dawn next morning, when the sentence will be pronounced, after which they will hasten to Pilate and have him confirm and execute it. The curtain falls, but is soon raised again to disclose the ante-room where the soldiers abuse their meek and patient captive. Judas passes rapidly across the stage muttering words which betoken the dark despair which is beginning to fill his soul. It is early morning. The maids are about to light a fire in the open court. Here is enacted that scene in which Peter figures so conspicuously, three times in succession denying all knowledge of

his now captive Lord. After the third denial, the Savior's eye falls upon him. With tenderness and sympathy the Master gazes at the sorrow-stricken disciple, who ere this has recalled the warning words at the last supper, that before the cock should crow twice he would thrice deny his Lord. He covers his face with his hands, weeps bitterly and leaves the scene.

Preceding the next act, which sets forth the despair of Judas, is a tableau representing Cain tortured by his conscience and a wanderer upon the earth. At its conclusion the rising curtain discloses Judas rushing into the assembly of the priests, as if to seek refuge from the sense of guilt which burdens his conscience. They are deaf to all that he says. Enraged and penitent he casts the money bag at their feet, and curses them as the partners of his crime.

The next scene represents the "field of blood" as it is called, a burial place for strangers, a wild spot near Jerusalem. In the center is a small mound overshadowed by a tree with leafy top. Judas appears, passes on hastily, seems greatly confused and excited as if battling with the stingings of conscience and finding no rest for his soul. He beats his breast and tears his hair. While thus raging, his eye turns to the fatal tree. He rushes toward it, gazes for a moment at the branch which seems as if made to suspend him. He tears the girdle from his garment. He springs at the branch, throws the end of the girdle over it, ties it about his neck, and the suicidal act is all but completed when the falling curtain hides the terrifying spectacle.

We now hasten to the closing scenes. Christ is taken before Pilate, the Roman governor, who appears upon

the balcony of his palace in military costume, the high priest and the Jews standing on the pavement below. He vacillates. He evidently desires to save Christ, but fears the disfavor of the people. At length he sends him to Herod, the tetrarch of Galilee, who is in the city. That dignitary, surrounded by his court and seated upon his golden throne, declines to have anything to do with the case and sends Christ back to Pilate, who tries again, but in vain, to satisfy the populace with some other disposition of the prisoner than that of execution. Finally he sentences the captive to be scourged, hoping that this may appease the rabble. Here the tableau of Joseph's bloody coat, brought home to his father, is introduced. Then sounds of scourging within the central stage are heard, with the clamor and mockery of the soldiers, and as the curtain ascends we see the last of the blows which fall upon the Savior who is fastened to a stake. His back is covered with blood. As soon as he is released from the pillar, he sinks senseless to the ground. When able to rise again, the soldiers put on him a scarlet robe, place a scepter in his hand, and set him upon a stool for a throne. Then they bring a crown of thorns, and amid brutal exultation set it upon his head and press it down till the blood runs over his face. Even Pilate's heart is touched, but the people will listen to no intercession. Pilate washes his hands in public to signify that he disclaims any responsibility for the affair, and the sentence of death is allowed to stand. The rabble is jubilant, and becomes clamorous for Golgotha, the place of execution.

This terrible ordeal has been patiently borne by the suffering Savior, and now that the question of execu-

tion is finally settled, the crowds of blood-thirsty people form into a procession to escort to the scene of execution the man who never did any one harm, whose heart burned with desire to do men good, who could even pray for his enemies in the midst of their cruel hate and fanatical rage. Roman horsemen lead the way. The centurion, with a company of soldiers follows, then comes Christ, bearing a ponderous cross under the weight of which he staggers at every step, and in his distress forms the central figure of a group upon which all eyes are fastened. Behind are his executioners urging him on by blows and pushes. Next follow two thieves who are to be crucified with Him, then the priesthood and a great crowd of people from Jerusalem appear. The painfulness of the scene is increased by the slow movement of the procession caused by the weakness of the condemned, who at last, completely exhausted, his countenance covered with blood, is unable to proceed farther. He staggers, and, borne down by the heavy cross, falls heavily to the ground. In vain does he try to rise. The cross is then placed on the shoulders of Simon of Cyrene, who is espied in the crowd by the chief rabbi. The procession moves on, but still not rapidly enough to satisfy the infuriated Jewish leaders and the murderous mob.

It is not difficult to imagine the effect of this vivid portrayal upon the crowded audience. Their feelings are intense. Not a rustle is heard, nor any sound unless of escaping sighs. All are breathless, not a few in tears. Heretofore the singers have appeared in rainbow colored robes. In the present act they have put on the garb of mourning as an expression of sorrow. Slowly they take their accustomed places before the audience. Soft music

accompanies the recitation of the Choragus, the whole band joining in the chorus. During the recitation heavy blows are heard behind the scenes. The executioners are nailing Christ to the cross. The rising curtain reveals the scene on Calvary—the most painful and exciting of the entire drama. The two malefactors are already crucified. On the ground, with head slightly elevated, is a large cross to which the Savior is nailed. An executioner takes the inscription, written in three languages, and fastens it to the wood above the head of the victim. Then he calls his companions, who raise the cross slowly to an unright position. The participants in the scene take up their stations in front and at either side of the cross, while many of Christ's near friends are seen in the distant background. Many of the Jewish people are among the spectators. The scene produces the most incomprehensible feelings in the heart of the beholder. He gazes on it in deep amazement, doubting for the moment whether it may not be the reality that he is seeing. He is transported back nearly nineteen hundred years to the hill outside the walls of Jerusalem. The figure of Christ is the object upon which all eyes rest. His arms are stretched out at full length, and his hands and feet are apparently pierced with nails. His whole form and countenance express the severest torture.

The minutest incident mentioned in the gospel narrative as connected with the crucifixion, is made real. We see the casting of lots by the executioners for the Savior's garments. Sneering remarks from the lips of the priests and the mob are heard, even though the object of their hate is nailed to the cross and is suffering excruciating torture. The words of the penitent thief,

as he beseeches Christ to remember him when he comes into his kingdom, and Christ's words in response, "Verily I say unto thee, Today thou shalt be with me in Paradise," break the silence. We hear the Savior's address to the beloved disciple, in which he commits to him the care of his mother, who with other friends is weeping bitterly near by. We see him suffering from thirst, and observe the sponge saturated with vinegar put upon hyssop and raised to his mouth. We hear his prayer for his enemies, and his cry of distress as though God had forsaken him. The convulsive movements which agitate the body announce dissolution. Once more the exalted sufferer lifts up his countenance and cries with a loud voice, "It is finished, O Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." His head sinks heavily upon his breast; the body is motionless; the struggle is over.

At the same time the elements of nature are unloosed. The earth quakes; the thunder rolls, and darkness covers the scene. Indescribable fear seizes the Jewish spectators. The Roman centurion, awed by the supernatural events, exclaims, "Truly this was a righteous man. Truly he is the Son of God." A servant rushes in and announces that the curtain of the sanctuary is rent in twain. Even the priests are not free from fear, although Caiaphas attributes the phenomena to the agency of Beelzebub rather than to that of Jehovah. Later, the executioners have orders to break the limbs of those who have been crucified. Christ, being already dead, is spared by the centurion, but to make assurance doubly sure, a soldier pierces his side with a lance and blood issues therefrom. The two thieves have been removed from the cross by the executioners, when Joseph of Arimathea appears with

permission from Pilate to take the body away and bury it. He and Nicodemus, together with John and the women, perform the work of love.

The scene of the descent from the cross is one demanding peculiar skill and patience on the part of all engaged in it. The action in many of its details is copied from Rubens' celebrated picture, although it differs from it in a number of particulars. Two ladders are placed against the cross, a short one in front, and another at its back, reaching to its full height. Mounting upon them and using a large roll of linen cloth, first releasing the hands and feet by drawing out the nails, Joseph and his associates carefully take down the body from the cross, tenderly remove the crown of thorns, reverently anoint it with oil, and bear it away to the sepulcher hewn in a rock near by, wherein no man had yet laid. A great stone is placed before its entrance and is securely fastened, as the curtain falls. When it rises again, it discloses four soldiers, watching at the closed and sealed grave. They are speaking with one another about the fearful phenomena connected with the crucifixion. At last they fall asleep. Suddenly an earthquake is felt; the stone falls from before the sepulcher; Christ steps forth, the living from among the dead, and disappears. The soldiers are dumb with terror, but at length gather up courage to examine the grave, when they find that the occupant is gone. A number of women appear, bearing costly ointment wherewith to embalm the body. Entering the garden they discover that the stone is rolled away, but their sadness increases when they cannot find the body of their Master. An angel appears from the depth of the grave and tells them that they will find him in Galilee.

Soon, too, come the Pharisees, and the soldiers tell them all they know about the event. Money is offered to induce them to say that the disciples came by night and stole away the body while they slept. At first they refuse to do this, fearing punishment, but the Pharisees promise to protect them. The scene is then enacted in which Christ appears to Mary Magdalene. It is tender and touching. At first Mary fails to recognize her Lord, but when she does so, she throws herself at his feet, and exclaims, "Rabboni! O my Master."

The curtain falls and the chorus enters the proscenium for the last time, to announce the glad tidings of the event witnessed in the preceding act. "He is risen!" says the leader, his face beaming with joy as he delivers his last message to the assembled spectators. The entire chorus joins in a song of praise and victory, which introduces the closing tableau, that of the ascension, which the rising curtain reveals on the central stage. In the midst of a company of friends and disciples, the risen Christ, clad in the same apparel in which He rose from the grave, stands on the brow of Olivet, holding in his left hand a banner emblematical of victory, while his right hand is raised as if to bless those who bow at his feet, or stand as witnesses of his glorious ascension. On either side of him, and pointing to his person, are two angelic figures, mentioned in the book of Acts. Kneeling at the foot of this elevation on which Christ stands, are children, the adorers of the cross. Still farther to the front and to the right, kneeling, and with folded hands, is Mary, the mother of the Lord. To the right and left are seen the well known figures of the apostles—John shading his eyes, with Peter at his side, together with

Martha and Mary, Simon and Lazarus; the women of Jerusalem who bewailed his fate; Nicodemus also, and Joseph of Arimathea, all in various attitudes of devotion, surprise, and glorification. While they thus watch the Savior, he slowly ascends and disappears from view, followed by the wistful wondering gaze of the assembled friends. While the chorus sings the beautiful, heart-stirring strains of the hymn of victory, with its constant refrains of hallelujahs, and just before the last refrain, the falling curtain conceals the beautiful tableau, and the signers, gathering up their flowing robes, slowly and gracefully leave the stage.

For the first time the assembled multitude is left alone, to reflect on the marvelous scenes which have been witnessed. Moved to the inmost depths of the soul are most of the spectators as they leave the theater. The impressions left by the play are powerful and grand. A new meaning has been given to the awful tragedy which took place at Jerusalem nearly nineteen centuries ago. While there might have been improvement at some points in the play, one feels in no mood to be critical. Such a play is not to be judged by theatrical standards. One feels that it is a wonderful representation of the last days of the Savior's earthly life, and is subdued by the reverent spirit manifest from the first scene to the last. The costumes were surprisingly true to the representations left us of those early times, while the scenery, the grouping of the tableaux, and all the arrangements, were calculated to throw floods of light upon even the most familiar Scripture.

But the one great thought which fills one's mind, there in that devout religious atmosphere, and which

does not leave it for a long time afterward, is that that play, so terrible to contemplate in some of its parts, is no mere fiction. It is based upon and stands for a mighty reality. That suffering, agony, and distress, that cruel death, as also that glorious resurrection, actually took place. It is a matter of history, the central fact of the world's history. To think of the purpose of these sufferings, to open a way of salvation for all men, including one's self, is overwhelming. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life." If one's heart had failed to go out in renewed gratitude and love to God, and a new consecration to the work which was inaugurated by his Son, it must have been impervious to the most deeply touching and affecting influences the world has known. One can hardly fail to be made better by seeing the play, and realizing that it represents the depth of suffering to which Christ descended in order to save men.

# VII

# Study of the Bible By Topics.

## FOREWORD.

It is surprising how many references, in the aggregate, may be found in the Bible to any important subject of which it treats. These references are scattered here and there, and often deal with the topic in hand in the most incidental manner. Yet by gathering these passages together, studying them in connection with the context in each case, and chronologically so far as possible, then combining the results, a greatly enlarged view of the subject may be gained, and the real teaching of the sacred Word will be made to stand out in bold relief. There are many advantages in pursuing the study of the Bible by this method, especially after one has become familiar with it historically, and has made a thorough study of it by books.

A single example will suffice. The question of Christ's enthronement above after his ascension, and the nature, scope, and continuance of his activities there in the interests of his earthly kingdom, is a most interesting study, from which the devout believer may derive abiding encouragement and inspiration.

For practical suggestions as to topical study of the Bible, see Page 57, in "Methods of Bible Study." (1st Section of Book.)

## CHRIST ENTHRONED.

Having in the chapters preceding pointed out certain methods by which to make the Bible more interesting and clear, we naturally ask ourselves why this effort is made. The answer is apparent. It is the more perfectly to understand Jesus Christ and our relations to Him—the central figure of the Bible and the world's Savior—for ourselves, and to promote our spiritual growth, to say nothing of enabling us the more effectively to present Him to others. This is the most successfully accomplished when the Scriptures are the most faithfully and attractively unfolded.

In order to deepen our own appreciation of Christ and to enable us the more impressively to set Him forth for the acceptance of others, we may appropriately, at this point, note the interest which the Father, who sent Him into the world on His high mission, manifested in Him during His earthly life, bearing witness to Him by raising Him from the dead, receiving Him again into heaven, and giving Him a seat at his right hand. It is of vital importance to remember that the Christ in whom we trust for our personal salvation, is an enthroned Christ, to whom has been committed all authority and power in heaven and in earth. Were this fact magnified more than it sometimes is, people would the more certainly be convinced of His greatness and His value as a Savior.

## I. Enthronement and Activities in Heaven.

(1.) Never did an enterprise seem more completely to have failed than did that of Jesus after His death and burial. Whatever witness the Father may have borne Him as His well-beloved son while He was laboring to inaugurate His mission, while hanging upon the cross Christ seemed to have been abandoned to His fate. His despairing cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me," expresses this feeling. No one believed that God would raise Him from the dead. To the Jewish officials His death was the end of His claims to be the Messiah. His pretensions had made little impression, apparently, upon the public mind, and the handful of followers whom He had left were uninfluential. Now that He was in His grave, there was no further occasion on their part for uneasiness. While His disciples had "hoped that it had been He who should redeem Israel," (Luke 24:21) they were obliged to acknowledge their disappointment, and to admit that His death was an end to their hopes. All that He had previously said respecting His death and resurrection they had forgotten—most likely because they had never comprehended it. It only remained for them to return to their homes and to resume their former occupations.

But this complacency on the part of Christ's enemies and this sadness and disappointment on the part of His disciples were not long to continue. To the latter it was, in reality—although they did not realize it—but the darkness preceding the dawn. Only a few days later, these very disciples, so forlorn and dispirited, were filled with joy, hope, and confidence. Their faith in Christ,

which had been temporarily lost, was revived, while the new movement, which seemingly had been crushed beyond hope of renewal, went forward with augmented momentum and power.

(2.) Why was this? How is this surprising fact to be explained? The reason was that Christ had risen from the dead. God had raised Him up. He did not leave his "Holy One to see corruption." Amazing as was the thought, the resurrection was a fact. The disciples were all witnesses of it. Christ had personally appeared to them, first to one, then to others, then to all, and in such circumstances as to leave no possible doubt in their minds, skeptical though some of them were inclined to be, in regard to its reality. Later still he showed himself to above 500 persons at once, most of whom, Paul says, writing twenty-five years later to the Corinthian Christians, were then alive (1 Cor. 15:6), and to whom He appealed in confirmation of what He said. The evidence of His resurrection was so incontestible that it was no wonder that the sorrow of the disciples was turned into joy, that they gave themselves to the service of Christ with an intelligence, a zeal, and a faith, such as had never animated them before. They were willing, yea eager, even in the face of certain persecution, perhaps death, to go to the ends of the earth to proclaim the fact of the resurrection and its mighty significance. The tremendous change which took place in the minds of the disciples, and the fresh impulse then given to the Savior's cause, can only be adequately accounted for by the testimony which God gave in raising Him from the dead.

(3.) Having lingered on earth long enough to satisfy the disciples of the reality of His resurrection, to

revive their confidence in Him, and to commission them to go forth in His name to disciple all nations, the Savior prepared to withdraw from them and ascend to heaven. He who had from time to time borne witness to his Son during his earthly career, continued to do so in a manner more signal still. He received Him to himself, exalted Him to the highest, gave Him a seat at his right hand, enthroned Him head over all principalities and powers.

The narrative of the ascension is very brief. It does hardly more than mention the fact. It declares that, standing on Olivet, with His chosen ones about Him, His work on earth finished and His exaltation awaiting him, Christ lifted up His hands and blessed them. And even as He was doing so he was parted from them, lifted above them, and, slowly ascending, presently a cloud received Him out of their sight. Meanwhile as the disciples lingered on Olivet, gazing upward, two angels, we read, appeared to them and reminded them of what had before been declared to them, but which they had forgotten, that the One who had ascended would return. This Jesus, they said, which was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven. With minds filled with what they had seen and heard, with thoughts of the glory upon which their Lord had entered, and of the blessed work which had been committed to them to do, full of joy and hope they went back to Jerusalem. (Mark 16:19, 20, Luke 24: 50-53, Acts 1: 6-12.)

The ascension of Christ, and the glorification and enthronement involved in it, were the crowning testimony which the Father gave the Son. Peter, both in his dis-

course at Pentecost (Acts, 2:33) and in his first epistle, treats it as such. Paul, writing to the Ephesians, called attention to the fulfillment in it of the words of the Psalmist, "When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." (Eph. 4:8.) The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews lays stress upon the priesthood of Christ as having its completion when, by the ascension, he entered into the most Holy place. But a special proof of his reception into the heavenly glory was the Pentecostal effusion, which Christ had declared to his disciples would be to them a sign of its accomplishment, and which they recognized as such at that time. Thus the one to whom the Father bore witness in the angelic announcement at the advent; at His baptism in the descent of the Spirit and in the voice from heaven; again and again during the period of His humiliation, notably at the transfiguration; and by raising Him from the grave, was at last received by the Father into heaven and enthroned in glory.

In confirmation of His exaltation, several times after Christ's departure visions of Him were vouchsafed to one and another of His followers. Stephen, the first Christian martyr, looking steadfastly into heaven in his dying hour, declared that he saw the "heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God." (Acts 7:56.) Saul, the persecutor, afterwards called Paul, nearing Damascus, was stricken down and blinded by a bright light from heaven, and heard the voice of Him who had been crucified, but whom, this voice declared, he was now persecuting. (Acts 9:5.) It was the turning point in his life, and nothing, thereafter, in the slightest degree shook his faith in his risen and exalted Lord.

John in his exile at Patmos saw the glorified One, and heard His voice saying, "Fear not; I am the first and the last, and the Living one; and I was dead, and behold I am alive forevermore." (Rev. 1:17, 18.) Later, in speaking of the new Jerusalem, John says: "And I saw, and I heard a voice of many angels round about the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands; saying with a great voice, Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honor, and glory, and blessing. And every created thing which is in the heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and on the sea, and all things that are in them, heard I saying, Unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb, be the blessing, and the honor, and the glory, and the dominion, for ever and ever." (Rev. 5:11-13.)

There He still is, in the midst of the myriads of the heavenly host—angels, the redeemed of all the ages, the chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely. It is beyond our thought. Figures, symbols, may give us glimpses of this indescribable glory, but they are only glimpses after all, and fall infinitely below the reality. This exaltation of the Son of Man seems to have been anticipated by the prophet Daniel long before. "I saw in the night-visions, and, behold, there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a son of man, and he came even to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his

kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." (Dan. 7: 13, 14.)

(4.) But what, more particularly, we may reverently inquire, is Christ doing in heaven? What is His occupation? Is He simply existing there, sitting perpetually on the throne of glory, receiving the homage of adoring myriads in heaven and on earth? Or are we to think of him as active, aggressive, related to or participating in human affairs? It may seem a strange inquiry, a matter of relatively slight consequence to us, something in regard to which men can only speculate. Not so. We are not left in entire darkness on this point. Not a few glimpses are permitted us in Scripture into the life and activities of the exalted One. These are set forth by various figures, which not only afford an interesting study, but are calculated to yield the noblest inspirations to the receptive soul.

The Scripture representation is that the enthroned Christ is occupied in administering the spiritual kingdom which He inaugurated when upon earth, making all things bear upon the end which He had in view from the beginning, its final, absolute, and glorious triumph. This he does by means especially of two agencies—first, His Spirit, whom He sent after His departure to be His invisible representative in the world, able to be everywhere at the same time, as He himself could not have been; secondly, His providence, which extends to all events, great or small, and pertains alike to nations and individuals. Yet there is nothing arbitrary in the workings of either His Spirit or His providence, nothing which interferes with the freedom of human action.

The Spirit of God may be said to work internally, in

the minds and hearts of men, presenting motives to influence them, while the providence of God may be said to work externally, opening the way before his people, shaping movements, over-ruling events, bringing about results.

The manner of this divine working is well illustrated in the book of Acts. There the Spirit, though invisible, is represented as a Person, as speaking to the apostles and others, suggesting, directing, telling them what to do. Providence co-operated, opening the way before them to carry out these promptings of the Spirit, over-ruling events which were seemingly adverse, to the furtherance of the gospel. When, for instance, after the death of Stephen, a bitter persecution against Christian people broke out in Jerusalem, by which they were compelled to flee in all directions through the land for safety, the Holy Spirit prompted them to bear testimony for Christ wherever they went, as a result of which many were led to believe. (Acts 8:4 and ff.) In the providence of God, the persecution was made to give a powerful impulse to the very cause which its enemies thought to crush.

What was so well exemplified in the experience of the apostles, has ever since been the method of the exalted Savior in directing the affairs of His Kingdom. The Holy Spirit has moved upon the hearts and thoughts of men, impelling them to certain courses of action in the interests of His Kingdom, and providence, co-operating, has opened the way before them, removing oppositions and hindrances, over-ruling them for good, and making even the wrath of men to praise God. If the divine hand is not always as clearly manifest as it seems to have been

in the apostolic age, or as in critical events it seems to be occasionally now, it is not because God is not present in the activities of his church and people, in missionary movements, in national matters, or in the world's affairs; it is because men have not sufficient spiritual discernment to perceive His presence.

Though time may be required for the accomplishment of Christ's purposes, He never loses sight of them. Even during those seasons which seem to his people to be darkest, his plans are still in process of realization. As He has all power at His command, as His resources are exhaustless, and as all this is pledged to the attainment of His purposes, there is no room for question as to the final outcome. It is nowhere stated when this triumph will be realized, but the fact itself is over and again declared, and all the various movements among men have direct or indirect relation to it. Everything is bearing in this one direction.

Is not the conception a grand one! The movement which was inaugurated nineteen centuries ago in weakness, which was seemingly defeated when Christ was put to death, is now the greatest, mightiest movement in this world, a movement in behalf of righteousness and human redemption, a movement which has continued to advance in spite of human opposition, a movement destined, though centuries may be required for its consummation, finally to prevail throughout the earth, the ever-living, enthroned One, who has been directing it, at last to be "King of kings and Lord of lords."

(5.) But while this mighty movement, directed from above—as a general directs a great and comprehensive military campaign—is going forward, there is a phase of

it, perhaps more wonderful still to contemplate, which is not to be overlooked—the active, personal interest of the glorified King in the welfare of each individual member of the spiritual kingdom. Mysterious as this may seem, however much it might appear as if His attention must be absorbed with this tremendous world-plan and its execution, so complete are all His arrangements that He is able to take minute personal supervision of the life and experience of each one of his trusting children, and cause all things to work together for their good. (Rom. 8:28.) We wonder how this is possible, but his Word declares, He himself declares, that it is so. This He brings about through the use of the same agencies which are employed in working out His larger plans, His Spirit and His providence, His Spirit working within the heart and life, His providence shaping external events, and both co-operating to bring about one great purpose. Furthermore—and this is another mystery—Christ is able to hear and answer the prayers of His followers, and as effectually in each individual case as if it were the only one brought to His notice. He is ever waiting to be gracious unto all who come to Him. He recognizes their weakness, their liability to temptation, sympathizes with them in their trials, and out of His ample resources, is able to help and strengthen them. "My grace is sufficient for thee."

Nor is this all. Christ is represented as making intercession in behalf of His people. If they sin, they have in Him an Advocate with the Father. He is their great High Priest, tender and merciful, an office for which His earthly experience of suffering and sorrow abundantly qualified him. This high priestly function is another

important phase of His heavenly activities. "For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." In view of this fact, the writer to the Hebrews continues: "Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help us in time of need." (Heb. 4: 15, 16.)

Still again, our ascended Lord is represented as preparing a place for His own when their earthly sojourn has been completed, so that they may be with Him where he is. "I go to prepare a place for you." (John 14: 2.) Whether this is to be understood literally as a place, or simply as a state, matters not. The realization of the promise will be blessed and satisfying. The mansion prepared for us will be an attractive abode, free from evil, suffering, and sorrow. It will be an abode of purity and righteousness and love. In that home of the redeemed the Lamb himself shall be the light. "He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more. Neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more." (Rev. 21: 4.) "And there shall be no curse any more: and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be therein: and his servants shall serve him; and they shall see his face; and his name shall be on their foreheads. And there shall be night no more; and they need no light of lamp, neither light of sun; for the Lord God shall give them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever. (Rev. 22: 3-5.)

What inspiration in the thought of such a heaven as this! The glorified One is there,—our Savior, elder Brother, Friend, and yet our enthroned Lord. This is

to be our home if we prepare ourselves to live in it. Here are the prophets, Moses, Elijah, Isaiah; here are the apostles, John, Peter, Paul; here are the martyrs and all the faithful and true of the ages past. Here are many of the dear ones who have fallen asleep in the Lord. Sin, suffering, sorrow, trouble them no more. Could we but grasp the thought, realize what it means, how easy it would be to persevere in the ways of righteousness! The pathway before us would grow brighter and brighter to the perfect day.

These considerations afford a glimpse into the glorious realm and into the activities of the exalted and enthroned Christ. He is not idle. He is constantly interested in the welfare of His earthly followers, is interested in the affairs of men and of nations, and is operating in them by his Spirit and His providence. Some time he will come again—when, there are no data by which to determine. Even He himself could not tell. It was certainly known, he said, only to the Father. (Acts 1:6, 7.) But when He does come, it will not be in humiliation, as at first. It will be with the retinue of heaven, in the glory of the Father. (Matt. 25:31, 32.) The manner of his coming will be in keeping with his kingly prerogatives. Nor will it be to establish a material kingdom on earth. His kingdom was to be, is, and ever more will be, a spiritual kingdom. He who was before Abraham, whose first advent was long foreshadowed, He who, though persecuted and slain, was, by the power of God, raised from the dead, He who ascended to heaven, and was there enthroned above principalities and powers,

He who has ever since by His Spirit and His providence been directing the affairs of the kingdom, is at length to triumph over all its enemies and reign as King of kings and Lord of lords. Our Savior is not a dead Savior, a merely historic Christ, but a risen and living Redeemer, glorified, enthroned, all-powerful, all-loving, ever active, able to fulfill all His promises and to realize the hopes of His confiding children.

### II. Progressive Enthronement On Earth.

Not only, as we have seen, is Christ actually enthroned in heaven, it is none the less true, although it may not be as generally recognized, that He is yet to be, is already becoming, enthroned on earth. The seat of this enthronement is in the hearts and lives of His people. Furthermore, many who have never yet bowed to His scepter, are yielding in glad submission at His feet. The influences of His Spirit are steadily permeating human society, and are being felt in the various relations of life. All the movements of human progress are along the lines and toward the ideals which He marked out when on earth. Christian principles are coming more and more to dominate the institutions of men and to control the forces of the world. These facts are significant and prophetic. They confirm the representations of the Word in regard to Christ's exaltation on high, and His activity, through the agencies at his command, in human affairs. In heaven He is now recognized as "King of kings;" on earth his supremacy is gradually coming to be recognized. His progressive enthronement on earth is proof of His actual enthronement in heaven. The

prayer, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth," is to be realized. The kingdoms of this earth are yet to become the kingdoms of our Lord.

(1.) Christ's kingship over the individual heart and life is recognized at conversion. His supremacy is not complete at that time, but as more and more the entire nature is brought under the sway of His Spirit, every thought into captivity to Him, He gradually assumes entire control of it. With varying progress this work goes forward in the heart and life of each true believer. In many instances, this enthronement within has seemed to be as complete as could be conceived in view of the imperfection of human nature. There have been persons whose meat and drink has been to do the Lord's will. By their desires and prayers He has taken possession of their hearts. So it was with the disciples after Pentecost, who were willing to lay down their lives for Him. Many of them did so. Such was the case with Paul, whose inner history is so fully reflected in his epistles. From the time of his heavenly vision on his way to Damascus, he was wholly devoted to Christ. All his thoughts and aspirations centered in Him. For him to live was Christ.

Not a few of the successors of the apostles, as the history of the church shows us, have manifested a corresponding devotion. Christ seems completely to have been enthroned in their lives. Rare examples of apparently complete consecration to Christ are found in such persons as Francis of Assisi, Savonarola, Luther, Wycliffe, Knox. Such men as Ulfilas and St. Patrick, by their sacrifices, proved their loyalty to their Lord. For Him they surrendered earthly prospects and hopes; for

the promotion of His cause, they toiled in the face of opposition and reproach; for Him they were willing to seal their testimony with their blood.

The history of modern missions abounds in examples of similar consecration. Such names as Henry Martin, Samuel J. Mills, Adoniram Judson, Robert Moffatt, David Livingstone, Bishop Pattison, stand out in bold relief in missionary annals. Taking their lives in their hands, men and women have braved untold hardships and dangers in carrying out their Lord's command to give the gospel to every creature. Faithfully they have stood at their posts until stricken down by disease or death. Even while massacres have gone on about them, expecting themselves to become victims, they have retained their faith, or, like the recent missionary martyrs in China, have bravely gone to their untimely end. Only through the complete enthronement of Christ within them has this been possible.

But not only in the hearts and lives of these more conspicuous characters has Christ been enthroned. Many others, less known, or wholly unknown, have in every age been no less dominated by His will. In the common walks of life, in the rank and file of the church, in obscure places, in sick chambers, in whatever providential station placed, men and women have demonstrated how completely Christ has been enthroned in their lives. The martyrs to the faith in the early centuries, have their counterparts in the martyred converts from heathenism in recent times, in Madagascar, in Armenia, in China. Rather than deny their Lord, believers in our day have suffered torture, been slain, even rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer for His sake. In all the ages

since the Christian era, this hidden work of divine grace has been going forward in the hearts and lives of multitudes of the followers of Christ. His enthronement has been growing more and more complete, His sway more absolute, the number of His devoted adherents constantly increasing. This work will go on until this kingship shall be everywhere recognized on earth, as now it is in heaven.

(2.) The ultimate complete enthronement of Christ on earth is becoming increasingly manifest also in the practical benevolences of men and in the permanent humanitarian institutions which they have established. These are the outgrowth of the influence of His Spirit and of His teachings. Prompted by the spirit of brotherly love which He inculcated, hospitals for the sick, asylums for the feeble minded and for other unfortunates, orphanages for dependent and homeless children, houses of refuge for the erring, social settlements for improving the environment of those living in the midst of degrading associations and surroundings, institutions for the care of the needy, for alleviating bodily suffering, for mitigating the evils of society, have been established and are constantly multiplying. Such institutions as these, which are unknown in heathen countries, are characteristic of Christian lands. Men have given liberally to promote these humanitarian ends, and their liberality is increasing. The number of persons, too, who are devoting their lives to this form of service for the Master is rapidly growing. A love for humanity has thus been gradually developing under the influence of Christ's Spirit—not simply a love of humanity for its own sake, but for humanity as Christ himself saw and loved it. Notwithstanding its natural

unattractiveness, he saw the glorious possibilities in it. So pervasive indeed, has been the leavening influence of the Christian spirit, that the state itself has come to feel it. This is seen in the more humane laws which have been enacted, and in the assumption of the care of many classes of unfortunates, in whom, half a century ago, the state manifested little or no interest whatever. Thus whether men do or do not realize or recognize it, Christ's dominions are being steadily extended in every sphere.

(3.) It is this same spirit of Christian love which has prompted wide-spread efforts to improve the condition of men morally and spiritually, as well as in mere physical respects. Not only in the home land, where a broad patriotism might prompt to effort in behalf of one's own countrymen, but in foreign lands, in countries far remote, and in the isles of the sea, in lands of superstition, degradation, barbarism, this work is being carried forward, supported by the consecrated offerings of Christian men. At home, in addition to the regular institutions of the gospel, there is the work among the slums of our great cities, the various forms of city missions, work in the prisons, work among the emancipated millions of the south and their descendants, among the red men, among those who come to our shores from the overcrowded empires beyond the Pacific. It is the outworking of the good Samaritan spirit which was long ago inculcated and illustrated by Jesus Christ. Even more unselfish still, perhaps, is the spirit which prompts a corresponding work abroad. The effort is to introduce the gospel and Christian institutions, with all their uplifting influences, and all the elements of a Christian civilization, so that in time they may gain complete control for

Christ. In this way individuals not only, but entire nations and races have been transformed and led to rejoice in the blessings of salvation. During the past century especially, Christ's kingdom has been rapidly extending its bounds abroad. His kingship has been increasingly recognized. The number of His loyal subjects, in whose hearts He is enthroned, has been rapidly growing. In nothing, perhaps, more than in this work of foreign missions, is the prospective triumph of Christ's kingdom more clearly foretokened.

(4.) The progressive enthronement of Christ on earth is seen in other spheres still. Advancement in this direction is apparent in the kindlier spirit which actuates men in their relations to each other, in the better treatment of children, in the improved condition of woman wherever Christianity prevails. It is evident in the growing recognition of their stewardship by men of wealth. It is now no uncommon thing that vast sums, even millions of dollars, are given, or left by bequest, for the founding and the maintenance of institutions for the benefit of their fellow men. It is beginning to be seen in improved relations between labor and capital, in the disposition of both employers and employed to recognize the mutual obligations of the Golden Rule, and to submit serious differences to arbitration. Steadily the spirit and principles of Christ are making themselves felt. They are far from being supreme as yet in these various spheres; mighty evils still exist, gigantic wrongs still prevail—but, taking periods of time together, and considering all the circumstances, Christ is manifestly coming to His kingdom on earth—surely, even if slowly—as He has

already come to his kingdom above. In all these spheres, His Spirit and His principles will yet control.

(5.) Christ is being enthroned more and more in human thought. This is evident in the fact that in the world's best literature He already dominates. Directly or indirectly, He inspires that which is noblest in it. This is seen in Chaucer, Milton, Dante, Tennyson, Wordsworth, Browning, Whittier, Longfellow, and many others. New works upon Christian themes are constantly being issued. The libraries of the world are groaning under the works of Christian men, written in the interests of truth to make men better. Christ is the center of human history; he is more and more becoming the center of human thought.

(6.) Human governments have advanced along lines which embody the principles of Christ. They have been becoming more humane in spirit, less tyrannical, have granted larger liberty and greater privileges to the people. There is room for improvement still—the ideal is far in advance of the reality; but it is a notable fact that all this progress is in the direction in which Christianity points. In the relation of governments to each other, there is distinct gain. The sentiment in favor of amicable relations, of universal peace, is steadily developing. Efforts are made to mitigate the barbarities of war even, by international agreement, while the principle of arbitration among the nations is making encouraging headway.

Christ is king of this world, as well as of heaven. His supremacy is not yet everywhere recognized, nor is his enthronement complete. But everything points to His ultimate dominion over all, to the time when His Spirit will rule in all hearts, when His principles will dominate

the institutions of men, when the forces which control the world will be under His direction, when the kingdoms of this world will be subject to His control. Thus is the Scripture declaration of Christ's enthronement in heaven and his work there of administering His Kingdom on earth by His Spirit and His providence until it is ultimately triumphant, confirmed by the facts which meet our eyes today. Everything points to Christ's enthronement here, as now He is enthroned above. As the mustard seed continues silently to grow to maturity, as the leaven hidden in the meal continues its transforming work until all is leavened, so the enthronement of Christ on earth, even when the influences working toward it are beyond human observation, is progressing.

Away then with the pessimism which insists that the world is growing worse. The cause of righteousness is not suffering defeat. All the resources of heaven are pledged to its support. Great advances have been made already, but greater are in progress. The day of victory is approaching. It is our privilege, meanwhile, to be co-workers with our risen and exalted Lord in that grand enterprise which He inaugurated when in the flesh, and to share with Him at last in its glorious triumphs.

# VIII

# An Effective Means of Promoting Bible Study.

# FOREWORD.

Among the agencies for awakening and promoting a popular interest in Bible reading and study, the pulpit may be, should be, pre-eminent. Some varieties of preaching are less adapted to this end than others, but the present trend toward a more distinctly Biblical or expository type of it is an encouraging indication in this direction. Not only has this method many advantages in itself to commend it to the preacher, it is calculated also to be of the highest spiritual benefit to the people. Rightly employed, it can hardly fail to develop and to foster such a relish for the Bible on the part of those who listen to it, as to awaken in them the desire to feed upon it continuously for their own spiritual nourishment and growth. There is no more interesting book in the world than the Bible, none which has in it more of the elements of a genuine and sustained popularity. The wise preacher, recognizing this fact, will seek to make it a reality to his people.

The large influence which the pulpit may exert in stimulating and nourishing an intelligent popular interest in the reading and study of the Bible, is a sufficient reason for devoting this closing chapter to a consideration of the nature and advantages of the expository or expositional method of preaching, and to certain practical suggestions with reference to rendering it effective to the end proposed.

## AN EFFECTIVE MEANS OF PROMOTING BIBLE STUDY.

The aim in preaching is to present Jesus Christ as the Savior of men. Paul's exhortation to Timothy, "Preach the Word," expresses the true function of the pulpit. So inseparably connected are the written and incarnate Word, that Christ is best presented when the Scriptures are most clearly expounded. "Every Scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness." (2 Tim. 3: 16.)

But while the truth itself to be presented is ever the same, the manner of setting it forth and of applying it to the hearts and consciences of men may change with the special object to be realized. Among the varieties or types of preaching which prevail, we may name the topical, the doctrinal, the biographical, the expository, the hortatory. Each of these types, in its place, has its advantages. The wise preacher will not restrict himself or permit himself to fall into bondage to any of them. "The best way to preach is to preach every way." Yet the foundation of the discourse should always be the Word of God. The characteristic feature of distinctively Christian preaching is that it is Biblical.

There is a tendency, however, in our time, to drift away from this fundamental aim in preaching—a tendency against which one does not always guard. The pulpit notices in our metropolitan journals, sufficiently indicate this. The Word may not be ignored, although too

often it is employed rather as a convenience—to furnish texts and points of departure—than as a storehouse of spiritual truth from which the preacher is to draw, or as a mine in which he is to delve. The consequence is that in not a little of the preaching of the day, the Biblical element, which was intended to be paramount, is conspicuously lacking. The sermon is deficient in the very quality which is most spiritually enriching. Or this Biblical element is so obscured or so diluted as largely to lose its effectiveness.

As a corrective of this tendency and as a means of rendering preaching more effective, might not more prominence be given to expository preaching? This is not to disparage or in any way to detract from the value of other forms of preaching, least of all to claim that the expository is the only, or in all cases, the best method to employ, but it is a method which the ministry cannot afford to neglect, and which the people cannot afford to have neglected. In the recognition in recent years of the importance for Christian life of more Bible reading and study, the clergy should see a reason for a more distinctively Biblical form of preaching. The object of this chapter is to call attention to some of the practical advantages, both to the ministry and to the people, of laying greater stress upon the expository method of presenting the truth, or of a larger use of Bible material in the ministrations of the pulpit than is now common.

## I. Biblical Exposition in the Pulpit.

By expository preaching is not meant simply the minute explanation of a passage of Scripture, verse by verse,

in regular order, although that method well carried out is not without its advantages and is not to be disparaged. Nor is it the giving of a mere paraphrase of the original, or a running series of comments on some particular passage, although these may sometimes be of value; nor yet is it the presentation in orderly array, of the opinions of ancient and modern commentators upon a passage. It is rather the broad and thorough study of a special passage or section or period of Scripture; to set forth its meaning in its local drapery and its historical associations; to consider its relation to the chapter or book from which it is taken; to bring out the prominent spiritual truths and blessings which the passage suggests and which are adapted to the wants of one's hearers.

As the Bible is a record of the progressive revelation of God to men through a historical process, it will be important, first of all, to inform oneself as to the circumstances, political, social and religious, in which this revelation was made. In this way the principles of the divine administration, the workings of providence, and the truths which God intended to impress, will be made to stand out clearly, and their applicability to present conditions and needs will at once be apparent. Such preaching as this will be as varied as life. Or, some Bible character may be the theme or the foundation of a discourse. These Scripture characters illustrate every phase of human nature, so that each one of them may be regarded as a type of men now living. Perhaps this expository treatment will be applied to some Biblical incident, or to some striking scene like Elijah's contest with the priests of Baal on mount Carmel, or the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, in which case the narrative itself will be graphically set

forth, with such sidelights thrown upon it as modern research may supply, while the underlying principles and truths are clearly developed, and practically applied to present conditions. Or attention may be drawn to the analysis of some Scriptural argument as given by Paul, or one of the prophets; or to the unfolding of God's providence as exemplified in the history of the chosen people; or to the progressive character of the revelation made to Israel as illustrated in the different stages of its history; or a discourse, or a parable, or a miracle of Christ's may be explained. Such wealth of material does the Bible afford that every variety of treatment may be employed in utilizing it. It is the study and use of the Bible in this large, free way, as well as by the minute method of exegesis, which expository preaching demands. Under this treatment the Bible will become the most real, living, interesting, and stimulating book in the world. Yet in order to use this method of preaching successfully, no mere superficial study of the sacred Word will suffice. Something more than a glance over a chapter, or a hasty reading of a passage is necessary. A prayer meeting talk ought not to be tolerated in the pulpit. Hard labor is the condition of success. All one's mental powers should be taxed and the imagination carefully cultivated. Accurate scholarship and a true homiletical instinct are indispensable. If added to this there is large familiarity with modern literature and life, one will be enabled to enrich one's discourses with striking illustrations from science, art, nature, history, poetry, and biography.

If this method of preaching is resorted to as a means of economizing time or strength, or to escape the hard toil which successful sermonizing always involves, failure

is certain. Sometimes the difficulty is that the sermon has no definite aim, or that the material employed has not been wisely selected. Too often matter is introduced which is entirely irrelevant to the particular object in view. In expository, as truly as in any other discourse, one needs to organize the thought and group the material with reference to some definite purpose. The temptation to go off on side trips and excursions must be resolutely resisted. It is often true, in the suggestive words of another, that "the preacher fails to fuse his material in the fires of a historical imagination so as to make his narrative and his characters live, while frequently there is a failure to translate the Biblical thought into modern terms and to apply it to modern conditions."

The objection that expository preaching is monotonous and dull, is a reflection upon the preacher rather than upon his method. The Bible contains all the elements for the most interesting and instructive, the most timely and truly popular sermons.

Some of the prominent and successful preachers in Great Britain, where this method seems to have been more in vogue than in this country, are Doctors Joseph Parker, James Stalker, R. F. Horton, F. B. Meyer, Canon Gore, F. W. Robertson, Charles Spurgeon, Andrew Bonar, Alexander Maclaren. Of the last named it has been said that his "inexhaustible wealth comes, not from wells of English undefiled, not from the study of the great thinkers of the world, but from daily communion with the Biblical teachers, apostles, and martyrs, who, through faith have subdued kingdoms and put to flight armies of aliens." Dr. Wm. M. Taylor in his Yale lectures on the "Ministry of the Word," in a valuable chapter

on Expository Preaching which, though written twenty-five or more years ago, is as pertinent as ever—says (p. 179): "That this kind of preaching will be both popular and profitable has been clearly proved both from the past history of the pulpit and from the success of many living preachers. For illustrations," he continues, "I might point to Dr. John Dick's lectures on the Acts of the Apostles; Dr. John Brown's volumes on the Discourses and Sayings of the Lord; the volumes by Dr. Hanna on the Life of Christ; those of Trench and Arnot on the Parables; the various works of Dr. Cox; and for separate passages, to "An Expositor's Note Book" by the author last named. The volumes of Robertson on the Corinthians, and of Vaughan on the Philippians and the book of Revelation, are exceedingly valuable, while in another style Peddie's Jonah and Raleigh's Jonah are admirable."

A notable example of preaching of this character in this country is Dr. Taylor himself, long a pastor in New York City. This was by no means the only method employed by him, but it was a prominent method. It was usually his practice to devote the second service to sermons of this nature. Generally he had some course or series of them on hand, running through weeks and months. At one time it was the Miracles of Christ, at another the Parables. Then he took up Hebrews, Mark, and Acts. Five most profitable years, he says, were spent upon the Gospel of John. Next he turned to the biographical method, and took up Paul, David, Elijah, Daniel, Peter, Esther, Nehemiah, and other characters. Most of these courses have been issued in book form. In describing his method Dr. Taylor says that he first got at the real meaning of the Scripture, then gathered together

and read everything in his library on the subject. After doing this he always found an outline ready in his mind. In the biographical discourses, or those based upon Scripture narratives, the story itself, with necessary explanations, was set forth first of all. This was enriched by the results of modern investigation and study, and each discourse concluded with lessons which were practical, pointed, helpful. Dr. John Hall, also of New York City, furnishes another illustration of successful expository preaching. Although his preaching was often of the verse by verse order, it was no less effective, under his treatment, than other varieties of the expositional method at the hands of others. Dr. R. R. Meredith, recently of Brooklyn, who for many years conducted great Bible study classes for Sunday School teachers both in the latter city and in Boston, is still another example. One reason of his phenomenal success in both teaching and preaching, has been his thorough knowledge of the Bible. The writer once listened to him in Brooklyn when his sermon was based upon an Old Testament incident of the patriarchal period. By paraphrasing it, modernizing it as it were, all in the most graphic manner, clinching lessons as opportunity presented in the progress of the narrative, and gathering them all up for a single strong impression at the close, the great and crowded audience seemed to be held spellbound. It was truth presented in the concrete, truth relating to actual life and its experiences, and it was correspondingly interesting and helpful. This was a feature of Moody's preaching which was always popular with the masses. By his graphic portraitures he made Bible characters live again.

Dr. John A. Broadus, before he left the active min-

istry for a theological professorship, devoted himself very largely to this style of preaching. He says that when he was a college student with the ministry in contemplation, a professor said to him: "I want you to get Horne's Introduction and hunt up a paragraph quoted there from John Locke about the importance of reading the Bible a book at a time, taking each book as a whole. Now be sure to get it and read it." He says that the thought of reading the Bible in that way took hold of him, and a few years later, before Coneybeare and Howson were heard of, by a series of night sermons on the Life and Writings of the Apostle Paul, treating each epistle as a whole in the place where it occurred in the history, the aisles and the doors of the church were crowded and a new building had to be erected. Not every one, of course, would succeed as Dr. Broadus did, or as the others referred to have succeeded—the personality and skill of the preacher are factors in this as in other kinds of preaching—yet such examples of success as we have named are significant both as showing the possibilities of expository preaching and as exemplifying the real craving of the people for it. A new appetite for the Word of God has often been created by this method of presenting the truth it contains.

## II. Advantages to the Preacher.

We are now prepared to consider, more in detail, some of the advantages, for preacher and people, of this method of preaching. One of the *incidental benefits* accruing to the preacher is that he is freed from the mental perplexity, sometimes anguish, which are often experi-

enced in searching for a text. Let him once put this method into practice and a host of subjects will present themselves to his mind. When the work of one week is over, he is ready, without any solicitude, to begin the work of another, and with the assurance that each week's study will furnish momentum for the week that follows. A second incidental benefit of this method is that by having one's work thus outlined beforehand, with material readily available, one is helped to bridge over those seasons of mental barrenness and drought which come at times to all preachers. His work is not so much to create as to gather and arrange. While there is ample scope for the imagination in this field and for the exercise of all one's powers, one is not left entirely helpless and stranded if, for a season, the wings of fancy are clipped.

Another advantage to the preacher is the *mental enrichment* which the study which this method requires, affords him. This cannot always be said of the reading and study which are involved in preparation for much of the current preaching. Many a preacher realizes this and laments it. His work seems superficial, it is superficial, when for his sermon material he is obliged to go to the popular but ephemeral works of the day, or to the many-paged dailies, or spin continuously from his own inner consciousness. An effective remedy for this superficiality is to give a larger place, in one's preparation for the pulpit, to direct Bible study. Such study in itself is of the most profitable and enriching character. Contact with the Word of God always imparts quickening to the intellect. Some of the finest specimens of literary composition are found in the Bible. It is the masterpiece of

the world's literature. It abounds in precepts of political and social economy. It unfolds majestic conceptions of God, of His providence, of His purposes, of ethical truth, of redemption in Jesus Christ. In the lofty, wide-sweeping conceptions, and in the exalted ideals which it opens to the mind, there is nothing to compare with the Bible. By means of this study, one gradually becomes familiar with its subject matter, its history, its characters, its doctrinal truths. Important practical Biblical questions which might otherwise be neglected, are faced from necessity, while not a few of the erroneous ideas about the Bible and its teachings which may have found lodgment in the mind, are certain in due time to be corrected.

It is not difficult to see what mental acquisitions must result from such study. There is no better way of learning the contents of Scripture and of fixing them in mind than this; indeed the study of the Bible in this large way will help to counteract any tendency to narrowness which may arise from constant and minute study of single texts alone.

The *spiritual benefit* to the preacher from expository study and preaching is another advantage. This is the best possible corrective and preventive of the spiritual dearth which is often complained of as resulting from the preacher's being obliged to devote so large a portion of his time to the purely intellectual side of his pulpit preparation. But while this expository method calls for no less of the intellectual element than before, the material upon which the mind is exercised is so spiritual in its nature, that one is spiritually as well as intellectually quickened by being brought in contact with it. Thus instead of being a purely mechanical process, with all the

juices of the preacher's nature extracted, the work of pulpit preparation keeps him in constant touch with that which energizes the highest part of his being. As he pursues this method of study, he realizes the depths and riches of the Bible as would never be possible from merely studying about it, or regarding it simply as a repository of suggestive texts. In this way, too, he is able to preach from the depths—"artesian preaching" it has been termed—instead of gathering up mere surface water or that of stagnant pools, for the refreshment of his people. He is planted by the rivers of waters. Inspirations come to him, and through him to others, as from no other source. His mind becomes so saturated with the word and spirit and truth of God, that the Scripture rises to his lips as naturally as water rises in a spring.

George Müller, after an experience of fifty-four years said: "The vigor of our spiritual life will be in exact proportion to the place held by the Bible in our thoughts. I have read the Bible through one hundred times, and each time with increasing delight. When I begin it afresh, it seems like a new book. I cannot tell how great has been the blessing from consecutive, diligent, daily study of it." It was by feeding upon the divine Word—the Old Testament—that Christ's character was formed and nourished. With all the added spiritual wealth of the New Testament accessible to us, we of this age are even more favored than any who have preceded us. By constant and conscientious reading and study of the whole Bible, making this his business, the preacher can hardly fail of realizing large and constant spiritual nourishment, and thus be all the time becoming better equipped for his mission.

An enthusiastic Bible student declares that by this continued study of the sacred Word, one becomes so acquainted with the personality of such Old Testament worthies as Abraham, Moses, Samuel, David, Isaiah; or of John, Peter, Paul, in the New Testament, and so familiar with their thoughts, that to turn to the record of them becomes almost like coming into contact and communication with persons now living. Companionship with them becomes real. One delights in and profits by it.

The *inexhaustible material* which the Bible affords is another advantage of employing the expository method of preaching. The merely topical preacher will soon wear himself out, exhaust himself, because he is drawing simply on his own resources. But the expositor has the Word of God before him, and a lifetime will not exhaust it. It is like the widow's cruse of oil, the more one takes from it, the more there is left. The story is told of a noted Scotch theological professor who in the early days of his ministry, went in deep distress to a neighboring clergyman, saying to him: "What shall I do? I have preached all I know to the people and have nothing else to give them. I have gone through the Catechism, and what have I more?" To which his friend replied:—"The Catechism! Take the Bible man. It will take you a long time to exhaust that." And such has been the experience and testimony of the most noted Biblical preachers. They have found the Word of God exhaustless. The investigations of recent years have thrown fresh light upon it, new mines have been developed, in it new treasures have been exposed to view. Old narratives have been made to shine with new luster. Passages before obscure have

been illumined. The unfolding of institutions and ideas from their first crude foreshadowing in the Old Testament to their culmination in Gospel and Epistle, has been made plain. History, biography, poetry, doctrine, all the varied forms of literature which compose the Bible, are made more clear and suggestive. The continued study of the Scriptures cannot fail to fill the mind with ample stores of knowledge from which to draw. In fact, many valuable and suggestive thoughts beyond what can be made use of at the time, will be accumulated for use on other occasions. These themes, instead of being inconsistent with topical preaching, will give new interest to that method, will enable the preacher to present old truths with constant freshness and variety.

Furthermore, with this inexhaustible material before him, and a purpose on his part to utilize it, the preacher will be saved from the secularism which constantly surrounds him, by which many, instead of preaching the truth as it is in Christ, are sometimes led to substitute discourses on purely secular topics. This will save him from ranting and mere exhortation, and from "the philosophic essay, icily regular, splendidly null, from the polishing of sentences and the carving of cherry stones, when we should be shaping souls."

*Variety, freshness,* and *timeliness* in preaching, are promoted by the expository method. Some preachers fall into monotonous ways. There is a sameness in their topics, and a sameness in their treatment of them. Each sermon but measures off another yard of the one uniform roll. Or they confine themselves to a few favorite themes and do little else than to ring changes upon them, until their preaching becomes dull and juiceless, and the peo-

ple weary of it and lose interest in it. There is no necessity for this. For the preacher's own sake as well as for that of the people, this monotony ought to be avoided.

One of the best means of avoiding it is the frequent use of the expository method. For the Bible is the freshest and most attractive book in the world. It is a book for to-day, and in their deepest souls people are hungry for it. No one who conscientiously follows the discourses of Jesus, or the reasonings of the apostle, or the devotional meditations of the Psalmist, or the life of the people as Christ and the apostles dealt with it, will be narrow, one-sided, or monotonous in his preaching. Rather he will all the time be bringing out of his treasure house things new and old. To whatever line of truth his mind is drawn, he will not only find ample material in the sacred Word for its suitable development, but illustrations of it at once apt and striking. With this variety of spiritual food set before them, the varying wants of the people are likely to be met more fully than in any other way. The Bible, indeed, is the natural food of the human soul. Still further, in utilizing this variety of preaching material as found in the Bible, the preacher will hardly fail to get into the way of presenting truth more in the concrete, than, as is too often done, in the abstract. This will render his preaching more interesting and effective. The teachings of the Bible are set forth in connection with the life of the people and of the times in which they lived. To be fresh and vital, these teachings must be presented in their historical settings. Mere abstract truth alone, with the concrete eliminated from it, is the quintessence of dryness.

But not only variety in preaching and the vitality of

concrete presentations of truth are secured by the expository method; this method affords constant opportunity to deal effectively with questions of current interest, either incidentally—which is often the wiser course to pursue—or, when occasion seems to demand it, by making them definite themes of discourse. The Bible fits the life of every age and adjusts itself readily and naturally to every advance movement. Every true reform is anticipated in it. New light breaks forth from it continually as new points of view are reached, or as it is regarded from different angles. It is surprising how much Scripture can be found which is appropriate to all current questions, whether in theology or morals or practical life, whether it be the science of sociology or the moral aspects of industrial questions. There need never be any fear that the Scriptures will become obsolete in their relation to matters which pertain to any phase of man's moral or spiritual well-being. The Bible is the thesaurus of truth for every true reform, and the wonder is that this fact is so commonly overlooked. The true remedy for dullness, for monotony, for tediousness in the pulpit, is the profound study by the preacher of the Word of God.

### III. Benefits to the People.

Having considered some of the advantages to the preacher from laying greater stress upon the expository form of preaching, we will next note some of the benefits which the people would derive from it. By the expository method, preaching is rendered *more authoritative* to the hearer. The preacher's aim is to set forth the mind of God. That which gives preaching power is the convic-

tion that the Word of God is behind it. In the topical sermon the preacher may set forth his own opinions or the opinions of others, but what he says in interpreting the thought of God in the exposition of a passage of Scripture, is something quite distinct from this. It is the Word of God itself, and as such it carries a sense of authority which no mere human word is able to do. The conscience at once responds to it. It meets the soul's profoundest needs, and whether or not the hearer is ready to accept and obey this truth, it is felt to be a message from God. It comes with a "thus saith the Lord," and is the end of controversy. Men are made to feel that they are dealing with God himself. The preacher speaks to them "with authority and not as the scribes." Unless this impression is made, he fails to secure the peculiar power which the pulpit should possess, and his preaching is no more to men than the utterances of the political orator or the literary essayist.

There is the *educational value,* or its contribution to a larger and more accurate knowledge of the Bible. It is surprising how ignorant even professedly Christian people are of the Bible. Those who have not investigated the matter would hardly be prepared to believe it. Many persons intelligent in matters of business, politics, and in regard to current questions, are yet wofully deficient in accurate knowledge of the Word of God. Seldom or never do they read it. There are entire books, or large sections of Scripture, which are to them unknown territory. They may have some acquaintance with the leading facts of the Gospels, possibly of the book of Acts, but scarcely any acquaintance with the Epistles, much less with the Prophets. These persons may be

familiar with some of the Old Testament stories, but they have little idea of any connected Old Testament history. Their knowledge of the Bible is comprised in the little which may have survived in memory from childhood's days when they were taught in the home, or attended Sunday-school, and in what they may hear from the pulpit, when, occasionally, they drop into the sanctuary. Too often they are never seen in the house of God at all, and even when they are, too often very little of the Bible is heard. This is not denying that there are individuals here and there who are fairly familiar with the Scriptures, or that relatively there has not been a marked advance in this respect in recent years, but that generally speaking, the popular knowledge of the Bible is exceedingly limited. There seems to be little general interest in becoming acquainted with it, and little effort to do so. Often when Scripture references are called for at Bible readings or meetings for Bible study, the difficulty and embarrassment of many otherwise intelligent people in finding them, are really pitiable.

The test which a college President once made as to the knowledge of the Bible on the part of a large freshman class by presenting a list of extracts from Tennyson containing the simplest allusions to well known incidents and events of the sacred Word, and requesting an explanation of them, is significant in this connection. Some of the points in question were, "Joshua's moon in Ajalon," "Rough as Esau's hand," "Jonah's gourd," "Ruth among the fields of corn," "the mark of Cain," "pearls before swine," "the crown of thorns" and the "miracle at Cana." Only a few of the references were correctly explained, although the young ladies who belonged to

the class did somewhat better than the young men. And yet these students were from homes in one of the most intelligent sections of the country. This lack of familiarity with the Bible on their part is a significant confirmation of the popular ignorance of the Bible. For this various reasons were given;—the fact that parents do not in these days read the Bible to their children as much as formerly; that family prayers with Scripture readings are less common than was once the case; that there is less memorizing of Scripture passages in the Sunday-school than half a century ago; that much of the teaching of the Sunday-school is defective and inadequate; that the Bible is no longer read in the public schools; that this is literally an age when "of making books there is no end," when newspapers and magazines flood every home, which naturally tends to absorb the attention once given to the Bible. But, whatever the explanation, the fact of this widespread ignorance of the Bible calls for the serious consideration of those who are interested in the proper training and education of the rising generation.

Such considerations as these emphasize the importance of employing more largely the expository method of preaching. By this means the Bible would be kept constantly before congregations, and in such ways that the hearers, even if they neglected it in private, could not fail in time to gain some familiarity with its contents. It would be specially helpful were the preacher, in connection with his exposition, to take pains to give some practical suggestions as to profitable methods of Bible reading. Thus gradually the knowledge of the Bible on the part of the congregation would grow, a relish for

it would begin to develop, and the people would be led at length, perhaps, to read and study it intelligently.

The expository form of preaching insures the presentation of truth to the people in a *well-balanced proportion.* Preachers usually have their favorite lines of thought. They are attracted to some subjects more strongly and more frequently than to others, often to a greater degree than they themselves realize. It would be a surprise to many a preacher to know, as a record of his texts and topics for a year would show, how limited is the field to which he has confined himself in the selection of subjects. Some are constantly in the Old Testament; others are seldom or never there. The Gospels are the special favorites of some, the Psalms of others, the Epistles of a few. Thus large sections of the Bible and important truths are overlooked or neglected. In this way the people are defrauded of that which is their due, although they may not realize it. They have a right to expect that through the ministrations of the pulpit, the truth will be presented in its proper relations and proportions, that all sides, all aspects of it, will in due time be set before them. Instead of that the proportion is often ill-adjusted; the Word is not rightly divided. Partial, one-sided, ill-balanced views are inculcated. Half truths, the most insidious and mischievous forms of error, not infrequently originate in this way. One person, for instance, emphasizes God's justice disproportionately; another his love. Another is drawn to philosophical speculation; metaphysics are his hobby. The spiritual nourishment which the Word affords is but little utilized in his ministrations. One is concerned chiefly with the literary structure of the Bible, another gives large atten-

tion to current questions. Thus the weightier matters of the law are neglected. The weakness of much of the preaching of the past in New England was that it made unduly prominent that which occupies the least attention in the Bible. This unbiblical proportion of truth is well illustrated in a prominent theological work of a former generation, in which three pages were devoted to heaven, and eighty to hell!

An effective corrective of partial and unwise methods of preaching is in the adoption of some system of expository preaching. The Bible presents the truth in its proper proportions. By employing the expository method, one is obliged to consider the truths of the Bible, whether congenial or uncongenial, in the order in which they are there presented. One cannot confine himself to a few phases of truth or doctrine even if he wishes. One is compelled to give to each truth its proper place and weight. Just conceptions of God and duty take the place of those which are defective, partial, one-sided. Under such conditions, topics which receive slight recognition in the Bible, are not unduly magnified. One comes at length to prophesy, as Paul phrases it, "according to the proportion of faith." (Rom. 12:6.)

Furthermore, by pursuing a regular course of exposition, a pastor is enabled to deal with many subjects which the good of his people requires, but from which he ordinarily shrinks, even if he does not neglect them altogether. Sometimes it is not easy to declare the whole counsel of God, or to emphasize those particular truths most necessary to the spiritual well-being of the congregation. In expository preaching opportunity is constantly afforded for presenting truths which might other-

wise be deemed personal and offensive in their application. For presenting the truth in well-balanced proportions and most effectively, no better method than the expositional can be found.

It is admirably adapted to *meet the attacks of modern skepticism.* Skepticism is widely prevalent, and is a constant hindrance to the entrance of truth into men's minds. How can it be met and overcome? It is well to remember that modern skepticism has nothing really new in it. There is not a heresy now rife, or a form of error, which is not to be found, in germ at least, among the errors which began to be manifest when Christianity was gaining its first victories over the world. How were these errors then met? How did the apostles seek to counteract and overthrow them? The pages of Scripture contain the answer. The weapons of their victorious warfare were spiritual. They declared the truth as it was in Christ and kept on declaring it, in demonstration of the Spirit and with power. They wielded the sword of the Spirit, and not even Satan himself could stand before it. It was in such ways as these that skepticism and error, in all their subtle forms, were met and overcome. The Jew was confounded, and the various forms of Gentile unbelief were confuted.

What better method than this can be employed in dealing with forms of error which are now prevalent, and which are new phases of that error against which the apostles and their successors successfully contended? Why not use similar means to accomplish similar results? A readaptation of truth may be necessary in view of changed forms of error and the different conditions in which men live, but no better weapon for attack or de-

fence can be found than the sword of the Spirit. As the apostles, in face of all opposition and of the false views with which they were confronted, continued to "preach the Word" and to contend earnestly for the "faith once delivered to the saints," so let the pulpit today ring out the positive truth, and boldly declare the things which become sound doctrine. As Christ, who is still the light, is held up, the darkness of error will be dispelled.

Finally, and most important of all, through a judicious system of Biblical exposition, the *spiritual life* of the people is promoted. Spiritual life can only be nourished by food appropriate to its nature. The soul needs the tonic of a bracing spiritual atmosphere, as truly as physical health requires pure air. This spiritual tonic and spiritual atmosphere are found in the Bible. To breathe it is to breathe the atmosphere of Christ, to receive spiritual uplift and strength. The Bible furnishes the weapons which are needed for the spiritual warfare to which the Christian is subjected. Here also he receives the girding which is necessary in order successfully to meet the varied disappointments and ills of life and to bear its many burdens. Grace, strength, incentive to effort, all are to be realized through feeding upon the nourishing Word and promises of God.

This is illustrated by what took place in the reign of king Josiah. In a time of idolatry, widespread worldliness, and indifference, his spiritual advisers sought to bring about a reform in the religious life of the people. They desired to repair the long neglected temple walls, to re-establish its services, to secure a revival of righteousness throughout the land. The cause of this reform

was the discovery of the law of God, and the presentation of it, under the authority of the king, to the people. The king himself was profoundly moved as he listened to the old truths, just as Luther was, hundreds of years later, when for the first time he read the Scriptures and realized their meaning. The acceptance of the law was pressed upon the people. They solemnly renounced the idolatrous life they had lived and consecrated themselves anew to the service of Jehovah. Priests, Levites, the evangelists of the time, were sent through the land to instruct the people in the long neglected law. A general quickening of their religious life was the result. A new interest in religious matters was awakened, and through this contact with the Word of God, the people were brought into fellowship with God himself. This was the beginning of a great spiritual reform. Equally important was the reform introduced by the reading of the Word of God through Ezra and Nehemiah. As has been suggested, the Reformation was due to the same source. This is because the truth contained in the sacred oracles furnishes the only suitable nourishment to the life of the soul.

In no age and in no country can this life be healthful and vigorous if deprived of the food God has provided for it. Yet in many cases the Bible has practically become a lost book. If the preacher by any method can help the people to find it again, and awaken a new interest in its contents, he will do his hearers an invaluable service. A pastor once gave a discourse on the Gospel by Matthew, taking the entire book for his theme. One of his hearers, a banker, a leading officer of the church, an easy-going, worldly-minded person, who never

felt sufficient interest in spiritual things to attend the prayer meeting, said to him the next morning: "Well Brother ——— after hearing your explanation of the book of Matthew yesterday morning, I went home and read it through at a sitting." On another occasion the book of Esther was the theme of the morning's discourse. That evening an old gray haired deacon said: "This afternoon I read the whole of Esther." What better service can a preacher render his people than so to interest them in the Word of God as to lead them to read and feed upon it for themselves? Even if the Bible were no more than a human production, with no divine element in it, its presentation could not fail to be stimulating and uplifting. When we remember what it is, its origin, its lofty spiritual purpose, the motives it brings to bear upon the springs of action, the grace which it offers to all who will receive it, it becomes infinitely important to concentrate the attention of the people upon it.

Thus we see how many advantages to both preacher and people would result from the wise employment of the expository method of preaching. It need not be made an exclusive method. One's preaching should not all be run in one particular mold, or a hobby be made of any particular kind, but there certainly is need of putting special stress upon this kind of preaching at the present time. Much is heard in these days about the lack of spirituality in our churches, of worldliness, and there is doubtless ground for criticisms of this character. It may be that we are at an ebbing of the tide in this respect, and that a floodtide of spirituality is about to flow in: great spiritual movements are not always easily

and clearly to be accounted for in their ebb and flow. But however this may be, one remedy for the evil, and one efficient method for the reviving of the religious spirit in our churches, is to be found in a more general, a more thorough and intelligent feeding by Christian people upon the spiritually nourishing Word of God.

It is a hopeful indication that there has been in recent years so distinct a drift in the direction of a more wide-spread and intelligent reading and study of the Bible. The need of it is generally recognized. This being the case, the preacher, if wise, will take advantage of it, encourage it, help it on, especially by his pulpit ministrations. He will seek to get back to that type of preaching, the expository, which prevailed and was so effective in the time of the fathers; or at any rate to give it more prominence than it has received in his own presentation of truth, for this form of preaching is always a potent factor in the awakening of spiritual life in a Christian community. It has been less common in America than abroad. Prejudice against it, if prejudice exists, is less on account of the method than on account of the dull and unattractive manner in which it has been employed. With the changed attitude which prevails with reference to the Bible and the growing attention which is being given to its study, there can be no question that this kind of preaching, well wrought out and executed, would be as welcome here as in Great Britain. The success which has attended lectures and addresses upon Biblical subjects is certainly significant. They have become a special feature of Summer Assemblies, and are prominent in University Extension movements. Indeed, no subjects have aroused a deeper or more sustained in-

terest than those which have directed the attention of the people to the rich treasures, intellectual, moral, and spiritual, contained in the Word of God. Churches even, have been packed night after night, to listen to clear and intelligent expositions of the Scriptures. In one of the largest cities of America a series of meetings for the study of the Bible has been successfully sustained for several years. The interest manifested in this study has been phenomenal. Nor can it be accounted for by the attractiveness or skill of their leader, for while there are popular elements in his style of teaching, these are far less popular and attractive than many others possess. Nor is his scholarship so broad and accurate as to render it unusual. The attraction has been the Word itself, presented in simplicity and with unswerving confidence in its truth. In this way the Bible, to thousands of persons, has become a new, an interesting, an attractive, and a practical book. Its rich and unsuspected treasures have been brought to light. This continued interest in the study of the Word indicates a popular hunger for knowledge of it.

Not infrequently do we hear business men say: "After toiling all the week, filled with the distractions of business, it is disappointing to go to church on Sunday and be obliged to listen to discussions of industrial questions, or other matters of public concern, of which the secular papers are full; or matters of minute higher criticism, in which only Biblical scholars are concerned, and which they alone are prepared to appreciate. I want something restful to my spirit, something for my deeper nature, something which I cannot attain except at church, something from the Word of God which it is the func-

tion and the duty of the pastor, through his position and training, to obtain for me." This is undoubtedly the wish of hundreds of our more prominent and intelligent laymen. The time is surely ripe for giving the people more of the Bible itself from the pulpit.

Yet few of our ministers are fitted, either by training or experience, for the kind of preaching here advocated. This was made evident at a very large ministers' meeting held not long since in a metropolitan city. A Scotch minister presented a paper upon "Expository Preaching," a theme which his training and practice specially fitted him to treat. A noticeable feature of the discussion which followed was the well nigh unanimous and hearty commendation of that method of preaching in which our Scotch and English brethren are so successful. Its general adoption they did not hesitate to approve, but they acknowledged, many of them sadly, that they had not attempted it. As they had not been trained for it, they hesitated to employ it. The method of study to which they had become accustomed in the seminary, had failed to give them that large, minute, comprehensive knowledge of the Bible which the expositional preacher demands. Hence the habit into which they had fallen of preaching topical sermons and their unwillingness to attempt to preach those of any other character. At present our Theological Seminaries are giving more attention than formerly to the training of young men in this kind of preaching, and as the demands of the times are for it, it is not too much to hope that ere long it will become common.

The one thing to do for those who have not had this training, and yet feel that their people need more

accurate and more constant instruction in the Bible, is by actual practice to gain the skill requisite to preach attractive and satisfactory expository sermons. Recognizing the need, and desirous of obtaining for himself a thorough mastery of the contents of the entire Bible, a graduate of one of our most famous theological seminaries adopted the plan of frequently basing his discourses, especially for the evening service, on certain connected sections of the Scriptures. Without realizing it, his sermons assumed an expository character. In the course of a few years they had covered a large part of the Bible. Lessons drawn from a careful study of the leading characters of the Old Testament had been presented. Courses of sermons were delivered on the historical books, the blackboard being used and maps, to make the exposition more clear. Attention was given to the historical setting of the Prophets, and of the Wisdom literature, and the interest of the people was aroused as never before in the old Book that contained them. In the New Testament, the Gospels and most of the Epistles were employed as themes, as well as striking scenes in the lives of Paul and Peter. There were discourses also on the parables and miracles, and on special incidents in the life of Christ. As might have been anticipated, this method of preaching was enriching and satisfactory for the minister himself, and no less so for those who listened to him.

These illustrations indicate what may be accomplished by any one who will really make a thorough study of the Scriptures and resolutely attempt to give the results of his study in popular discourses to his people. The success, power, and popularity of the Welsh and Scotch

preachers, together with many in England, show us that this method of preaching deserves recognition among ourselves, and the sad lack of Scriptural knowledge on the part of the people renders it important that it be introduced into all our pulpits as soon as possible.

### IV. Suggestions as to Practical Methods.

A few suggestions in regard to practical methods which the preacher who would cultivate a more expository type of presenting Bible truth may employ to advantage, are ventured in conclusion.

The *books* of the Bible furnish a most interesting and fruitful field of research for homiletical purposes. To be appreciated these books need to be read and studied in the light of their historical settings. In most instances a knowledge of the facts gathering about their inception, the circumstances calling them forth, their authorship, the person or persons addressed, the object sought to be attained by them, would throw much light upon their meaning, perhaps otherwise obscure. A brief analysis of the contents of a book could then be made intelligently, and numerous practical lessons, suited to the present condition and needs of the people would be suggested. Such pulpit treatment of almost any book of the Bible, particularly of the prophets and the epistles, many of which are rarely referred to, would be an eye-opener to many in any congregation. The driest sections of Scripture, so regarded, could thus be made to glow with interest. The study required to prepare for the preaching of such discourses would yield a rich fruitage of results to both the preacher and the people.

The *history* contained in the Bible opens another interesting and profitable field of study. To master the essential facts of its historical portions is not so difficult a matter as to some it might seem. Every section of the history of the chosen people yields instructive lessons. Great truths pertaining to the providential government of God, which are as appropriate to the affairs of men and of nations today as in the olden time, are constantly unfolded. The long period of time embraced by the Bible narrative may be divided into about half a dozen sections, each one measurably complete in itself;—such, for instance, as the Patriarchal Period; Israel in Egypt to the Exodus and Conquest; the Judges; the Monarchical Period; the Captivity and Return; the New Testament Era. These sections, comprehensively set forth in order, would afford a bird's eye view over the entire Bible field. Afterward each of these periods might be subdivided, and thus Bible history be studied more in detail. If, for example, the period under review was the one which includes the making or organizing of the Israelitish nation, or from the exodus to the conquest, it could be subdivided into the exodus itself; giving the Law at Sinai; turned back at Kadesh; on the banks of the Jordan; the conquest by Joshua. The use of maps or blackboard would impart added interest to the presentation of such topics.

The *characters* of the Bible afford another exhaustless field of investigation and source of homiletical material. These characters are of every conceivable variety. All phases of life, all sorts of motives, all aspects of human nature, are brought to view. No better object lessons for illustrating and enforcing practical truth, for

warning against sins and vices, for setting forth qualities of character to be emulated, are anywhere to be found. Such characters as those of Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, and Moses, of Joshua, Saul, David, Solomon, of Elijah, Nehemiah, Daniel, in the Old Testament; and of Peter, John, Paul, Judas and others in the New, if employed as pulpit themes and graphically presented, could hardly fail to awaken a deep interest. There is no more interesting subject, as a rule, either for private conversation or for public address, than people. Sermons on the themes indicated, would certainly not lack for interesting material.

There are many striking *scenes and incidents* in the Bible which may serve as foundations for discourses. The Gospels furnish numerous incidents of this character, and the same is true of the book of Acts, which is devoted mainly to scenes in which Peter and Paul were the central figures. The historical and narrative books, also, of the Old Testament, are full of them, from the scenes and incidents found in Genesis to the startling events of the book of Daniel. For single discourses or for brief series of sermons, the supply of material from this source, and this of the most interesting and instructive character, is simply limitless.

Or again, the *sermons and addresses* of the Bible, which are preserved either in full or in outline, introduce one to an interesting line of study. The circumstances of an address, the speaker, the audience, may be pictured before the mind, and the substance of the discourse paraphrased. The grandeur, the practical character, and the suggestiveness for our own times, of the prophetic and other discourses of the Old Testament, and those of

Christ, Peter, Stephen, and Paul in the New, have not always been appreciated. Then too, the parables and miracles of Christ may be taken as topics. The former present truths which are as timely and as much needed today as of old.

It is well sometimes to devote a service to a consideration of some of the *illuminating sidelights* on the Bible, such as Bible geography, (with maps), and the manners and customs of Bible times. Many of the latter were so different from our own as to require explanation in order that the passages in which they are referred to may be understood. Or again, the perfect harmony between the lands of the Bible, in their physical features, the locations of cities and towns, the climate and vegetation, with the descriptions and allusions of the sacred Word written hundreds of years ago; or the light upon the Bible which recent discoveries have afforded, would yield themes of interest and profit.

In addition to those which have been indicated, there are many other lines of Bible instruction and study which will be suggested as one pursues his quest for the homiletical material which the Bible contains. Each person will of course choose his own themes and work them out in his own way. He may not at the outset be able to make his discourses of as graphic or as popular a character as he could desire, or to render them in the highest degree effective, but by making the form of presentation as well as the gathering of material a matter of study, he can hardly fail gradually to gain in facility and skill.

It is safe to affirm that no more fruitful or interesting lines of study will present themselves to the preacher's

mind than these Bible lines; no better material for single or serial discourses than this Bible material; no themes more interesting, suggestive, and instructive, or of greater variety than these Bible themes; none better calculated to be helpful and uplifting to the people, than those of this expository character. Certainly in no better way can a congregation be trained to a large and intelligent knowledge of the Bible, or a more abiding interest in its reading and study be developed in the minds of its members—an aim which should never be lost sight of by the preacher—than in this way.

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